Electronic Media Research Series

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

Edited by
Patricia Moy and Rico Neumann

ROUTLEDGE

Political Communication, Culture, and Society

As an installment of Routledge's Broadcast Education Association (BEA) Electronic Media Research Series, *Political Communication, Culture, and Society* focuses on the expansive concept of political communication and illuminates the processes, contents, and effects related to myriad forms and vehicles of political communication. Whether involving traditional print or broadcast media, social media platforms, or face-to-face discussions, political communication today has shaped how we perceive others and understand the world around us, including our place in it, and ultimately, how we engage with others as social, cultural, and political beings.

Hailing from multiple locations and drawing on a multitude of theories as well as quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the volume's contributors examine how communication intersects with politics in a broad swath of contexts, ranging from climate change to migration to the notion of political correctness. Collectively, they ask and answer questions about how today's richly textured media ecology shapes our political world and how political messages can fuel – and ameliorate – the issues that deeply cleave societies around the globe.

Relevant to scholars and students of journalism, media studies, and communication sciences, this volume will help interested readers better understand today's increasingly complex sociocultural world through the lens of political communication.

Patricia Moy is the Christy Cressey Professor of Communication and Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs at the University of Washington (USA). Her research examines communication influences on public opinion, and she is a former president of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, World Association for Public Opinion Research, and International Communication Association, where she is also an elected fellow.

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Series Editors' Foreword

Since its inception in 1948, the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) has fostered a serious commitment to scholarly research, though that commitment became more formalized with the publication of its first scholarly journal, *Journal of Broadcasting* (later *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*), in 1957. Over the Association's rich intellectual history, BEA's annual meetings have afforded both academics and professionals a wide range of opportunities for the presentation of important scholarship focusing on broadcasting and electronic media.

In 2008, BEA launched a series of programs designed to advance original research initiatives under the direction of the Association's Research Committee. For over a decade, the BEA Research Symposium Series, a new scholarly venture within the framework of the annual conference, has served to advance the research agendas of our discipline and provide a forum for some of the leading scholars and the latest groundbreaking research in our field. The first research symposium in 2008 was orchestrated by Jennings Bryant with a focus on media effects. This was followed in 2009 with a research symposium about technopolitics, under the direction of Lynda Lee Kaid.

In response to these two highly successful symposia, BEA entered discussions in 2010 with the Taylor and Francis Group of Routledge to form a partnership. The goal of this partnership is to publish an annual volume resulting from the yearly BEA Research Symposium. That new scholarly publication venture is the Electronic Media Research Series, with cutting-edge seminal publications on a broad swath of significant topics. The expansive list of volumes includes *Sports Media: Transformation, Integration, Consumption* (Andrew C. Billings); *Media and the Moral Mind* (Ron Tamborini); *Media Management and Economics Research in a Transmedia Environment* (Alan B. Albarran); *Media and Social Life* (Arthur A. Raney and Mary Beth Oliver); *Digital Technology and the Future of Broadcasting: Global Perspectives* (John V. Pavlik); *Race and Gender in Electronic Media: Content, Context, Culture* (Rebecca Ann Lind); *Risk and Health*

Communication in an Evolving Media Environment (H. Dan O'Hair); *Video Games: A Medium That Demands Our Attention* (Nicholas Bowman); *The Golden Age of Data* (Don A. Grady); and *Media Literacy in a Disruptive Media Environment* (William G. Christ, Belinha S. De Abreu, and Michelle Ciulla Lipkin).

The newest edition to the BEA Electronic Media Research Series, *Political Communication, Culture, and Society,* is edited by Patricia Moy (University of Washington) and Rico Neumann (Technical University of Berlin). This volume of 11 chapters had its origins in the 2020 BEA Research Symposium, which Moy chaired, and includes studies conducted especially for this publication. The goal of this volume – whose authors hail from multiple continents and represent many theoretical backgrounds – is to enhance our understanding of how communication intersects with and is informed by politics. Contributors to this volume provide an overview of political communication as it manifests itself in the most pressing issues of our time. They not only examine journalists' subjective claims about public opinion and how political satire gets processed but also delve into perceptions of political correctness and how racial inequities are perpetuated by virtue of how crime gets covered in the news. In today's world, there is no escaping the increasing role of social media, and contributors examine social media as a force in religion, refugee crises, and political elections. This collection is a significant contribution in a moment of division and global change. The BEA and Routledge are proud to make this important volume available to scholars and teachers across the communication discipline and beyond.

Glenda Balas
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Political Communication

A Lens on Society

Patricia Moy and Rico Neumann

Change—whether slow in coming or radical, challenged or welcome—has remained a constant throughout the millennia. At a moment in time marked by an unprecedented confluence of transnational developments – a pandemic, disinformation, #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, immigration, populism, and global warming, to name but a few – change speaks loudly. It propels the study of political communication and reinvigorates efforts to better understand and ameliorate the concerns that pervade culture, society, and, yes, the globe.

Such concerns are exemplified by the issue of racial equity and racial justice. In the United States, the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery in 2020 sparked unprecedented protests across the nation and brought back into the public eye the Black Lives Matter movement. With protests for racial justice cropping up around the world, the movement forced a reckoning in how individuals and organizations fought (and continue to fight) for racial justice.

But racial justice is only one of many battles being fought around the globe. Countries around the world continue to struggle with gender equity on many fronts, from wage gaps and gender parity in the workplace to sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. For example, in response to a stark underrepresentation of women in politics, Spain and other European countries adopted laws that require political parties to include at least 40% of women on their electoral lists (e.g., Wiesehomeier & Verge, 2020). In Sweden, women now represent half of the executive and nearly half of the legislative. In other corners of the world, the long-lasting legal battle over women's right to choose is marked by policy setbacks, as the 2021 abortion ban in Texas demonstrates.

Similarly, religious values continue to rend asunder many regions, as the Northern Ireland, the Israeli-Palestinian, and the Uyghur-Chinese conflicts illustrate. Whether it is a long-standing ethno-religious conflict or some debate about public policy, religion remains a powerful force in contemporary society, shaping discourse and laws ranging from abortion and

same-sex marriage to Muslim women being banned from wearing burqas and hijabs.

Whether they are of a social or political ilk, some issues can be culture-specific, while others impact a much larger population. Indeed, these issues embroil and divide small communities, larger countries, and even international alliances. Understanding the nature, causes, and consequences of such divides, especially as they relate to media and communication, is critical for negotiating differences, overcoming conflict, and building trust and cohesion. According to sociologists and social psychologists, people draw symbolic boundaries – by categorizing individuals and communities – to create ingroups and outgroups (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). Welcoming some to be part of one's community (or, more broadly, society) while rejecting others is often shaped by lines of difference rooted not only in demographics but also, increasingly, in value orientations (e.g., altruistic vs. competitive), single-issue attitudes (e.g., being "pro-choice" vs. "pro-life"), and behaviors (e.g., getting vaccinated or not).

Such lines of difference are visible in multiple domains. In the electoral context, voters in France, Brazil, and the United States have faced wildly divergent choices of candidates ranging from far-right, anti-immigration populists to progressive and socially liberal candidates. Similarly, the migrant crisis of 2015 saw Europeans either embracing or protesting asylum policies. Such responses differed markedly from the reactions to the massive displacement of Ukrainians after Russia's military invasion in early 2022. Such developments have forced a rethinking of identity – who citizens are and who they want to be as a nation.

Politics notwithstanding, the increasing prevalence of natural disasters due to climate change and the coronavirus pandemic have fundamentally impacted life as we know it. They have induced sea changes in health, mobility, and lifestyle; they have shaped how individuals interact with one another and even how they approach and value scientific evidence. Altogether, these phenomena illustrate how societies around the world are facing large-scale and increasingly fast-paced sociocultural changes. They also demonstrate the myriad ways in which ostensibly nonpolitical issues in culture and society become politicized, resulting in increased polarization and difficulties in finding common ground.

All these changes are reflected in mass media coverage and people's social media communications. Regardless of content, today's media environment differs markedly from that seen over a few decades ago. No longer are individuals limited in their choice of outlets, but today's high-choice environment affords consumers the opportunity to opt out of news altogether in favor of entertainment (van Aelst et al., 2017). Accompanying today's vast array of outlets is the customization of content via algorithms (Pariser, 2011), which further shapes how individuals consume and use social media.

With the increase in filter bubbles and echo chambers comes disinformation. Societies today are challenged by an erosion in the quality and truthfulness of information, especially in environments where conventional gatekeeping mechanisms are bypassed or redefined (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). The intentional spread of disinformation and the unintentional dissemination of misinformation – appearing as rumors, half-truths, or conspiracies, among others – pollute the political information environment (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019), thus contributing to a crisis of verification (Rojecki & Meraz, 2016) and a decrease in trust in journalism and news media in general (McNair, 2017; Nielsen & Graves, 2017).

Against the backdrop of an increasingly balkanized media environment, other trends have emerged. For one, established media organizations face declining levels of trust. In addition, the growing disconnect between publics and political institutions as well as between groups in society continues to intensify (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018). Contemporary political communication mirrors these developments: Today political elites can communicate directly with their supporters, thereby helping to reinforce preexisting viewpoints, mobilize, and strengthen ingroup identity. While today's media landscape allows more – previously silent or silenced – voices to be heard and be part of a deliberative process (Moy, 2020), incivility and hate speech obstruct efforts to find common ground, and they impact the health of political discourse, democratic processes, and civil society (Herbst, 2010). In fact, many digital public spheres operate in an information climate that fosters dissonance and disconnections, all of which have implications for political culture and democratic values (Pfetsch, 2018).

While this volume seeks to contribute to our understanding of how political communication intersects with *culture* and *society*, it is worth reflecting on these two broad notions and how they are viewed from the perspective of communication scholarship. Morally charged terms like "culture wars" or "cancel culture" or related notions like "identity politics" increasingly seem to permeate public discourse (often steered by right-wing politicians and commentators), as a simple Google n-gram-search for these notions reveals. For example, in the English-language literature, references to "culture war" multiplied more than tenfold over the past 30 years; the increase in mentions of "identity politics" is even greater. At their core is the notion of conflict, in which different social groups struggle over power of various stripes. Conflict and struggle, as well as fissures in contemporary societies across the world, are reflected in works old and new, such as Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1996), Francis Fukuyama's *Identity* (2018), and Amy Chua's *Political Tribes* (2019).

This edited volume takes us through some of those issues. Ordered alphabetically by the author, the intellectual journey begins in Europe, where *Beckers* examines the prevalence of journalists' subjective claims about

public opinion – or public opinion inferences – in Belgian news media. We then move to the United States where *Borah and Neumann* analyze the extent to which news media used Twitter as a source in the context of the 2016 presidential election. *Drouin and Young* examine the role of message-level and individual-level characteristics in processing political satire. Also in the United States, *Gonzalez and colleagues* examine Americans' views of political correctness and their ramifications in the 2016 electoral context. Others focus their analysis on ostensibly apolitical content, such as *Hickerson* who examines organizations' and individuals' communicative strategies on Twitter as they relate to refugee experiences and issues. Similarly, *Len-Ríos* explores how adherence to journalistic norms may help perpetuate existing power structures and racial inequities in the United States. *Malhotra and colleagues* take us to Singapore to investigate how social media use and religious identity interact to shape Muslim women's sartorial choices. Focusing on one of the most pressing issues in our lifetime, *Meeks* examines the effectiveness of different message strategies vis-à-vis trust and climate-change perceptions. *Neumann* analyzes the extent and the ways in which intergroup encounters are depicted in U.S. newspapers. Inviting the reader to Serbia, *Pjesivac and colleagues* critically dissect the discourse on antigovernment protests as presented by the country's public service broadcaster. The volume ends in Italy, where *Romeo* explores right-wing populism and the use of discursive strategies on social media that associate crime with minorities.

The various chapters in this volume report empirical studies and conceptual frameworks for studying phenomena at the intersection of politics, culture, society, and the media. Collectively, they examine how today's richly textured media ecology shapes our political world, and they illuminate several potential roots of divides in society and their implications, ranging from people's political correctness concerns in the United States to the rhetoric around protest events in Serbia. The portrayal and perception of a plurality of groups, especially nondominant vis-à-vis dominant groups in society, is a recurrent theme in this volume. For example, *Romeo* focuses on immigrants portrayed through the lens of right-wing populist politicians, *Neumann* focuses on news portrayals of intergroup encounters between Muslims and non-Muslims, and *Pjesivac and colleagues* examine political elites' protest rhetoric that marginalizes protest groups.

To better understand political communication effects and the mechanisms that shape those effects, it is important to first gain insights into *media content* as a potential antecedent in today's rapidly changing information environment. Using both qualitative and quantitative forms of content analysis, about half of the chapters in this volume illuminate how the communication phenomena they study are portrayed in different types of media. Both *Beckers* and *Pjesivac and colleagues* focus their analysis on

established legacy media (e.g., print and broadcast) to study journalistic practices, thus highlighting that journalism remains a significant part of political communication. Yet others, such as *Drouin and Young*, illuminate the infotainment trend in politics, thus showing that non-news content has the potential to address audiences who are typically not reached with conventional informational programs. A third cluster of studies, represented by the chapters from *Romeo*, *Hickerson,* and *Borah and Neumann,* base their analysis on social media content (e.g., Instagram and Twitter) to study how political elites and other networked opinion leaders bypass conventional gatekeeping mechanisms and even provide unfiltered content for traditional news media.

In addition to the actual media content, it is important to study media in their respective geographical context, considering the media and political systems in which communication messages are embedded. This volume brings together scholarship representing political information environments in countries like Belgium, Italy, Serbia, Singapore, and the United States, with many of them transcending geographic and language-based boundaries in the age of globalized social media.

Naturally, as individuals have grown increasingly dependent on information to make sense of the world, the study of media effects becomes paramount. Several chapters in this volume contribute empirically and theoretically to our understanding of how media exposure and interpersonal communication can elicit affective, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes. Using experimental designs and survey data, these studies focus on contemporary and polarizing issues that shape the political information environment. For example, *Meeks* alters issue frames by contextualizing climate change as a health or a national security matter to examine the differential impact of these two frames on people's climate-change beliefs. *Drouin and Young* study how certain message-level characteristics in infotainment formats, using techniques like hyperbole and irony, affect the level of appreciation and comprehension of feminist political satire. Analyzing survey data, *Gonzalez and colleagues* demonstrate how concerns about political correctness predict support for Donald Trump who heavily campaigned on this notion. Together, the chapters demonstrate a variety of outcomes, including how we process information selectively, how we perceive the world around us, and how this affects the ways in which we communicate with others.

Shedding additional light on the path between content and effects, many of the above chapters seek to demystify some of the communication *processes* and psychological *mechanisms* that have the potential to alter these effects. Using an experimental design, *Meeks* focuses on the role of source trust in affecting climate-change beliefs. Others demonstrate that an understanding of complex underlying processes may be best approached

by qualitative methodological approaches. For example, using focus group discussions and thematic analyses, *Malhotra and colleagues* highlight the ways in which social media use helps with constructing, maintaining, and reinforcing females' religious identity. Focusing on reporters as part of newsrooms and journalistic cultures, *Len-Ríos* explores how adhering to certain established journalistic practices shapes a mindset that helps to perpetuate racial inequities and power structures.

Together, the contributions in this volume not only demonstrate the breadth of topics that scholars can investigate from multiple angles but also link different research objectives. One objective involves understanding how political communication messages, traditionally studied in the context of election campaigns and the most important issues facing the day, can infuse our lives. This includes, for example, how journalists' subjective claims about public opinion might shape our interpretation of news events (*Beckers*), how refugee content on social media can help shift dominant – and often negative – narratives in mass media (*Hickerson*), and how pervasive political correctness references can affect political attitudes and behaviors (*Gonzalez* et al.).

A second objective relates to studying messages that are both deliberate in their crafting and can have unintentional individual- and societal-level effects. Several chapters illustrate these complex relationships: how traditional and established journalism norms may help evoke power structures (*Len-Ríos*), how issue emphasis may inspire climate-change engagement differently for partisans (*Meeks*), and how understanding humor in infotainment formats is conditioned by gender and gender-equity beliefs (*Drouin & Young*).

Regardless of – and because of – the contributors' specific projects, the volume develops a robust understanding of political communication contents, processes, and effects that involve a host of epistemological, theoretical, and methodological approaches. The volume combines insights based on interpretivist and primarily qualitative approaches (e.g., critical discourse analysis, focus group interviews, and thematic analyses) as well as positivist and primarily quantitative methods (e.g., content analyses, experiments, and surveys). Whether involving legacy media, print or broadcast media, new and social media platforms, or conventional face-to-face discussions, political communication today has shaped how we understand the world around us, our place in it, and ultimately, how we engage with it politically, socially, and culturally. In a volume that invokes expansive terms – political communication, culture, and society – the contributors compellingly remind the reader that political communication implicates not only political systems, institutions, and actors but also seemingly apolitical issues that impact culture and society.

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1 "The People Are Angry"

Public Opinion Inferences in Broadcast and Print News

Kathleen Beckers

Public opinion is of great importance in democratic societies, as it is both the input and the outcome of an informed citizenry (Burstein, 2003; Dalton, 2013; Gunnell, 2011). The media play a significant role in informing both elites and citizens on public opinion. For most people, news media are their main source of information to learn about what others in their population think about issues (Gunther, 1998; Mutz, 1992; Zhou & Moy, 2007). Journalists, on their part, need public opinion not only to help people reflect on issues and interpret events but also to defend the legitimacy of their reporting (Silverstone, 2013). Most studies analyzing depictions of public opinion in the news focus on explicit displays such as opinion polls or vox pops (interviews with ordinary people on the street) (e.g., Daschmann, 2000; Hardmeier, 2008; Marsh, 1985; Moy & Rinke, 2012; Strömbäck, 2012; Welch, 2002). While these are evidently worthy of study, public opinion can be represented in other, more implicit ways as well. Instead of relying on polls and surveys, journalists and other news sources can also refer to public opinion based on their own interpretation of news events (Entman & Paletz, 1981; Gans, 1979; Lewis et al., 2005).

These more implicit referrals are called "inferences to public opinion." These inferences, whether made by journalists or other actors in the news, are the most casual references to the public. Claims about public sentiment are often made without supporting evidence (e.g., "The people do not agree with the policy"), and their source and reliability often remain unclear, which means inferences are difficult for audiences to verify. They create the impression of public opinion being unified and are by nature a simplification of reality. Moreover, there are indications that journalists rely on their own perceptions of what public opinion is when reporting on a specific issue. One of the clearest examples of journalistic interpretations of events contradicting actual public opinion is King and Schudson's (1995) study of how President Reagan was systematically supported and lauded by the media for his popularity with the public, although he consistently received low approval scores in opinion polls. Entman and Paletz

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(1981) also found journalists to follow their own perceptions of events to report on public opinion rather than relying on survey data. However, although most journalists seem confident about their capacity to "read" public opinion, several studies (Beckers et al., 2021; Jerre, 2013) found that when compared to real public opinion data, journalists' perceptions of public opinion are biased.

Moreover, although public opinion inferences are off-the-cuff and often made rather casually, they are found to be consequential in the news. Previous research found them to influence people's perceptions of public opinion (Zillmann & Brosius, 2000), which, in turn, might also influence people's own opinions and judgments (Mutz, 1998). Thus, these seemingly casual references to public opinion might not be so trivial as they seem at first sight. In recent years, discussions on the role of the media in societal trends such as the increasing polarization of the political landscape have become more prominent (Levendusky & Malhotra, 2016). Most research on claims made on behalf of the public therefore comes from populist literature. Here, public opinion is seen as being a strategic tool that elites (mostly politicians but also the media) use to their advantage (Beaud & Kaufmann, 1999). Elite actors spice up their texts and speeches with references to public opinion because popular legitimacy is crucial for the spreading of ideas (Gusterson, 2017; Inglehart & Norris, 2017). Therefore, one of the questions of this study is who refers to public opinion. Are referrals to public opinion more and more part of a communication style used by politicians, and are those quotes picked up by the media? Or, is it mostly the journalists themselves who use public opinion to narrate their news stories?

To analyze the presence and use of public opinion inferences in the news, this study uses a systematic content analysis of Flemish print and broadcast news. All news items from four media outlets in four constructed weeks were coded, both in election and routine times. To the author's knowledge, this is the most systematic content analysis of the presence of inferences in both print and broadcast news to date. In short, this study focuses on where and when inferences to public opinion are used in the news, who makes them, and which public is referred to.

Inferences to Public Opinion

Before conceptualizating inferences to public opinion as a mediated display of public opinion, an elaboration of what "public opinion" means within this journalistic context is needed. Many different conceptualizations of public opinion exist within different contexts. This study looks at public opinion as referred to by sources (e.g., journalists or politicians), and it refers to a set of opinions that are shared by broader groups in society. Public opinion thus becomes some sort of dichotomy between people in

favor and against a specific topic. For every issue, a minority and majority opinion can be determined, and the majority opinion could then be seen as "the" public opinion. This is, of course, a simplified conceptualization of a complex concept like public opinion, but it matches the way in which the media and other scholars refer to it (Lewis et al., 2005). Talking about public opinion, namely, always entails a simplification of a more complex and nuanced reality.

Because media are citizens' main source of information to learn about what others in their population think or do, media representations of public opinion might be consequential. In this regard, many studies have already focused on the presence and/or influence of different types of public opinion information in the news, with a large body of research examining polls (see Hardmeier 2008; Marsh 1985; Moy & Rinke 2012), vox pops (e.g., Beckers et al., 2018; Kleemans et al., 2017), and protests (e.g., Giugni, 2004). However, not many studies have investigated these casual inferences in the news as the central focus of a study. Research that did examine them (as part of studies on other public opinion displays or types of communication) used a diverse terminology to refer to them: "subjective claims about public opinion" (Peter & Zerback, 2020), "general news slant" (Zerback et al., 2015), "inferences to public opinion" (Lewis et al., 2005), or "majority" or "populist" claims (e.g., Heinisch & Werner, 2019; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). All concepts above refer to the same type of unsubstantiated claims. This chapter follows the conceptualization of "public opinion inferences" put forward by Lewis et al. (2005), as it underscores how claims about public opinion can be based on the judgment of the source (e.g., journalist or politician), which is not based on objective evidence and therefore remains unclear whether the claim is valid or not.

The most systematic study to date in this area is Lewis et al.'s (2005) content analysis of US and UK print and broadcast media. The researcher coded all public opinion references in the news from September to October 2001, including general inferences to public opinion. They found that inferences to public opinion accounted for over half of all references to public opinion in the UK (58%) and US (52.4%) television news, surpassing coverage of polls. So, more often than trusting reliable poll results, journalists make claims about public opinion based on their own interpretation of what the public wants or thinks. The authors found inferences to be used most frequently in hard news stories such as politics and the economy, which aligns with studies focusing on other public opinion displays in the news (Beckers et al., 2018; Brettschneider, 2008). Peter and Zerback (2020) conducted a similar study on a sample of news items from the public service (*ARD*) and commercial (*RTL*) broadcaster in Germany and found more than half of all references to public opinion were subjective claims about public opinion, while only 4% of public opinion cues were

opinion polls or claims that were at least backed up by polling evidence. Apart from the abovementioned studies, research on the frequency of public opinion inferences is still rather scarce. To explore the use and scope of public opinion inferences in Flemish news outlets in general, the first research question asks:

> ***RQ1.*** *When and how often are inferences to public opinion used in Flemish print and broadcast news?*

The presence of public opinion portrayals in the media is expected to differ during election times, with an increase in portrayals during election campaigns. After all, the tide of public opinion becomes more crucial during political elections, as it not only plays a role in media reporting about the election outcome but also defines the outcome of elections. Most research on public opinion portrayals in election times has focused on horse-race coverage and thus on the presence of public opinion polls in media coverage (e.g., Bhatti & Pedersen 2016; Patterson 2016; Strömbäck 2012).

Brookes et al. (2004) did study the presence of public opinion inferences in election news and found that they accounted for 42.8% of all public opinion cues in television news during the 2001 UK election campaign. Although they are still very prevalent, compared to the findings of Lewis et al. (2005) in routine news, inferences seem to be slightly less common in election news. This might be explained by the fact that during election campaigns, other public opinion displays such as polls gain more attention in news reporting, as was found in previous studies focusing on election news (e.g., Searles et al., 2016). However, although this is—as far as we know—the first study to directly compare election and non-election news, based on previous research we expect that inferences will be less common in election news, resulting in Hypothesis 1.

> ***H1.*** *Public opinion inferences are less common in election news compared to non-election news.*

Who Infers Public Opinion?

Many sources in the news can infer the opinion of the public; examples include journalists within the news item itself, a politician who is quoted, or a citizen interviewed on the street. In their study of references to public opinion in the 2001 UK election coverage, Brookes et al. (2004) found that 42% of the inferences were made directly by journalists, 36% by journalists on behalf of politicians ("politician X thinks that the public ..."), and 22% were delivered by politicians themselves. Lewis et al. (2005) also found that inferences to public opinion in routine television news were

made predominantly by journalists (91.3%) and hardly ever by other (quoted) actors, such as politicians and experts. One would expect then that general inferences to public opinion will be most frequently made by the journalists themselves (H2).

However, there are also reasons to expect that changes have occurred recently in these casual references. Several studies have found, for instance, a rise in the popularity of populist politicians, who are expected to make inferences to "the people" and public opinion regularly as part of their communication style (Gusterson, 2017; Inglehart & Norris, 2017). It goes without saying that public opinion is of great importance for all politicians. Across the political spectrum, politicians frequently refer to public opinion to demonstrate their responsiveness to what citizens want and that they are in touch with "the people" (Aalberg et al., 2010; Dalton, 2013). In particular, politicians increasingly legitimize their decisions during election periods by referring to public opinion (Bernhard et al., 2015; Schmidt, 2018). Thus, one can expect that during current election campaigns, it is not just populist politicians who rely on a rhetoric rife with referrals to public opinion but also all politicians will legitimize their policies more by mentioning what "the people" want or think. After all, such communication strategies reach across restrictions of ideology or political orientation (Strikovic et al., 2019).

However, one could also expect that journalists themselves feel a greater need to legitimize themselves by relying on inferences to public sentiment (Dalton, 2013; Silverstone, 2013). In other words, they would legitimize their reporting by describing what "the people" want or by framing a news item in terms of public opinion. In times when media are criticized for being biased, journalists might more frequently feel the need to refer to what they perceive to be public opinion (Beckers et al., 2021). Thus, inferences should be made in the news mostly by journalists (H2), but in election periods, politicians should resort to framing their claims and quotes through the lens of what "the people" want (H3).

> ***H2.*** *Most general inferences to public opinion will be made by journalists.*
>
> ***H3.*** *In election news, politicians will make more general inferences to public opinion compared to routine news.*

Who Is Inferred?

Where inferences are concerned, Lewis et al. (2005) make a distinction between "specified" and "unspecified" inferences. The first category of specified statements refers to inferences about public opinion in a defined population (e.g., "the Belgians are disappointed"). With unspecified inferences, however, the opinions referred to are rather vague, and no particular

population is mentioned (e.g., "many people think that …"; "some people say …"). The latter is a journalistic device that journalists use to narrate and legitimize news stories based on their own interpretation of what the public thinks on an issue. Statements such as "some people say" or "some observers believe" imply that the universe of those who hold the position is broader than just one person. Such rather vague unspecified inferences are a display of popular support for a claim, and the extent of that support is even more difficult for audiences to judge and/or verify. It is therefore important to also include these in the current study.

As Lewis et al.'s study was based on data from 2001, looking at social media was not relevant yet. However, in recent news reporting, there are multiple reasons to expect that journalists will use social media to infer public opinion. Several studies already have found that journalists use social media to learn about public opinion (Anstead & O'Loughlin, 2014; Beckers & Harder, 2016; Lewis & Molyneux, 2018). Journalists would regularly quote social media posts, identify trending topics, and report the general sentiment based on social media (Anstead & O'Loughlin, 2014; Jungherr et al., 2017). However, these studies focused only on the use of social media searching specific keywords. It consequently remains unclear how widespread this phenomenon is and how it relates to other references to public opinion. Did "the people on social media" replace "the people"?

RQ2. *Who is the public referred to in the inferences to public opinion?*

Method

To gain a systematic insight into the use of public opinion inferences, I conducted a manual content analysis of four constructed weeks of Flemish print and broadcast news. Three weeks of news (Monday–Saturday, there is no print/broadcast news on Sunday) were constructed from the first half of 2018, which can be seen as a routine, non-election period; in addition, one week (Monday–Saturday) was constructed from the last month before the regional, federal, and European elections (May 2019) in Flanders. Constructed weeks were used to prevent one big news event from dominating a specific news week. They also prevent oversampling specific weekdays, as this might also influence the data (e.g., more financial news on Tuesdays, more culture on Wednesdays). Eighteen days of news were coded during the routine news period (2018), resulting in 2,947 news items. During the election period (2019), six days of news were coded, resulting in 947 news items.

For print news, all news from the main sections of the newspapers were coded, with hyperlocal news annexes and sports pages, advertisements, and obituaries excluded. Regional news in the main section of the newspaper

were included (this is identical across regions), but the hyperlocal pages contain news at the level of specific communities (e.g., someone becomes 100 years old) and differ based on geographical location. A total of 1,434 news items were coded from the elite newspaper *De Standaard*, which contained on average 68.48 news items per day (*SD* = 22.13); 1,486 news items were coded from the popular newspaper *Het Laatste Nieuws*, with on average 62.60 news items per day (*SD* = 16.71).

For television news, the entire 7 p.m. evening newscasts (excluding sports news, characterized by a switch to a separate sports news anchor) from the main commercial broadcaster and the public service broadcaster were coded. These two newscasts are the only evening newscasts in Flanders. In total, 365 news items were coded on the public service broadcaster *Eén*, and 609 news items were coded on the commercial broadcaster *VTM*. On average, more news items appeared per day on the commercial broadcaster (*M* = 27.88; *SD* = 3.72) than on the public service broadcaster (*M* = 19.96; *SD* = 6.51).

To find the inferences to public opinion, coders read each news article or watched entire newscasts and listed all statements invoking public opinion. Public opinion inferences were described as *"statements about public opinion that are made without direct evidence. It concerns all references to any form of public opinion, including those made by people who speak in the news (e.g., experts or politicians)."* This description was followed by dozens of examples. If the item, for instance, referred to the results of a poll (e.g., "two thirds of Belgians support the king"), it was not coded as a general inference. The coders underwent several training sessions to learn how to correctly identify the inferences. One news item could contain more than one reference to public opinion. Reading and watching entire newspapers or newscasts was absolutely crucial for the quality of the data. Using keywords would not have enabled coders to find all inferences to public opinion, as these inferences are often implicit, and exploring how many different manners of referrals to public opinion occur is a main goal of this undertaking. Every news item was coded for some basic variables and more in depth when an inference to public opinion was present.

For all news items, the news topic was determined. For every item, up to three topics in order of importance could be coded (i.e., the main theme had to be put first). If other topics are touched upon in the news item, they also could be included (e.g., a news item that not only focuses on immigration but is also related to crime). The codebook was based on the master topics codebook of the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP; see https://www.comparativeagendas.net/belgium). In addition, coders had to indicate whether the news item explicitly referred to the federal, regional, or European elections of May 26, 2019. They also coded the media platform, date, and title of all news items. Coding stopped here if no inference to

public opinion was present. If one or more public opinion inferences were present, each one was coded separately. For every inference, coders had to indicate the source (e.g., journalist, politician, expert, or other) and, as a control, note the name and function of the source. Lastly, coders coded the population of the public opinion inference (i.e., who is the group of people being referred to?). This was in open-ended form, as exploring the different populations was one of the research goals.

Regarding the coding process, five individuals participated in an intensive training program, after which they pilot-tested the codebook on 100 articles. Much attention was paid to the quality of the data. As we expected challenges in identifying all implicit inferences, all news media were coded twice. This was a time-consuming endeavor yet crucial for succeeding in identifying all references. The second round of coding resulted in an accuracy of 87%. Intercoder reliability was calculated on 5% of the data and reached Krippendorff's alpha above 0.7 for all variables (0.83 for correctly identifying public opinion inferences and 0.82 for identifying the issue).

Results

This study provides a systematic understanding of when and how inferences to public opinion are made. First, considering the general presence of inferences in the news, coders identified a total of 695 inferences to public opinion in 3,894 news items. Of all news items, 12.7% contained one or more inferences to public opinion. As can also be seen in Table 1.1, the large majority of news items comprising an inference contained only one, and the maximum of inferences was six. Large differences emerged across media platforms: More news items on the public service broadcaster contain one or more inferences (12.1%) compared to the commercial broadcaster (5.75%), $t(1{,}141) = 4.29$, $p < 0.001$. For print news, the elite newspaper contained more (19.2%) inferences than the popular newspaper (9.4%), $t(3{,}283) = 9.97$, $p < 0.001$.

How and when do inferences occur? That is, are they related to specific topics? In Table 1.2, the share of news items containing one or more inferences are displayed per news topic. Inferences to public opinion were relatively most common in news on civil rights and liberties (e.g., gay rights,

Table 1.1 Number of inferences per news item

Number of inferences	*Number of news items*	%
None	3,400	87.3
One	367	9.4
Two	77	2.0
Three or more	50	1.3

Table 1.2 Share of news items containing one or more inferences per news topic

Topic	*N items with inference*	%
Civil rights and liberties (*N* = 127)	32	25.2
Politics (*N* = 438)	104	23.7
Foreign affairs and development aid (*N* = 240)	46	19.2
Environment (*N* = 87)	15	17.2
Education (*N* = 96)	16	16.7
Labor (*N* = 105)	16	15.2
Sports and recreation (*N* = 132)	20	15.2
Religion (*N* = 20)	3	15.0
Macro-economics and taxes (*N* = 83)	12	14.5
Foreign trade (*N* = 35)	5	14.3
Immigration and integration (*N* = 105)	14	13.3
Scientific research and technology (*N* = 151)	20	13.2
Defense (*N* = 62)	8	12.9
Energy policy (*N* = 43)	5	11.6
Community development and housing (*N* = 39)	4	10.3
Art, culture, and entertainment (*N* = 527)	54	10.2
Health (*N* = 172)	17	9.9
Traffic and transport (*N* = 256)	22	8.6
Micro-economics and trade (*N* = 335)	27	8.1
Agriculture (*N* = 50)	4	8.0
Justice and crime (*N* = 457)	30	6.6
Social affairs (*N* = 72)	4	5.6
Fires and accidents (*N* = 45)	2	4.4
Weather and natural disasters (*N* = 52)	1	1.9
Other (*N* = 164)	13	7.9

women's rights; "*There has been a fuss about it* [racist stereotypes in theme park attraction] *for years*" [*VTM*, May 24, 2019]), and politics (e.g., the functioning of the government, elections and government affairs; "*Boris* [Johnson] *is extremely popular with the ordinary people*" (*De Standaard*, May 14, 2019). Foreign affairs, environment, and education also contained many general inferences: "*The Palestinians are furious*" (*De Standaard*, May 14, 2018). The inferences to public opinion thus seem to be made mostly in traditionally "harder," politicized news topics. "Softer" news topics such as art, culture, and entertainment contained much less general inferences to public opinion.

To study their occurrence more systematically, a logistic binary regression analysis was conducted where the presence of an inference (0 = no inference; 1 = inference) served as the dependent variable. The results can be found in Table 1.3. The analyses specifically distinguish between election (i.e., the item specifically refers to the elections) and non-election news across topics, as based on the literature (e.g., Brookes et al., 2004),

electoral context might affect the presence of inferences. These data reveal more inferences to public opinion in election compared to non-election news. This seems logical as public opinion is a central concept in election news, and elections revolve entirely around what citizens want. However, there is also a significant difference for year: More inferences to public opinion occurred in 2018 compared to the election year 2019. This finding might indicate that inferences are made mostly in general, routine times and are replaced by other public opinion displays such as polls that are typically linked to election times, even when the news is not linked directly to the elections (Brookes et al., 2004; Searles et al., 2016). Our first hypothesis is thus only partly confirmed: There are indeed more inferences

Table 1.3 Logistic regression analysis with the presence of inferences as dependent variable

	B	*(S.E.)*	*Exp(B)*
Medium (print)	0.846***	(0.118)	2.334
Year (Election year 2019)	–0.533***	(0.120)	0.587
Link to elections	0.671***	(0.180)	2.078
Topic (Politics = reference category)			
Civil rights and liberties	0.119	(0.206)	1.126
Foreign affairs and development aid	–0.174	(0.183)	0.841
Environment	–0.294	(0.296)	0.745
Education	–0.278	(0.262)	0.757
Labor	–0.585*	(0.273)	0.557
Sports and recreation	–0.500†	(0.258)	0.607
Churches and religion	–10.026	(0.627)	0.358
Macro-economics and taxes	–0.603*	(0.298)	0.547
Foreign trade	–0.171	(0.401)	0.843
Immigration and integration	–0.442†	(0.254)	0.643
Scientific research, technology, and communications	–0.569*	(0.239)	0.566
Defense	–0.324	(0.343)	0.724
Energy policy	–0.806†	(0.456)	0.446
Community development and housing	–1.118*	(0.543)	0.327
Art, culture, and entertainment	–0.881***	(0.170)	0.414
Health	–1.122***	(0.281)	0.326
Traffic and transport	–1.122***	(0.233)	0.326
Companies, banking, and domestic trade	–1.197***	(0.213)	0.302
Agriculture	–1.166†	(0.485)	0.311
Justice and crime	–1.308***	(0.205)	0.270
Social affairs	–1.584**	(0.478)	0.205
Fires and accidents	–0.979*	(0.490)	0.376
Weather and natural disasters	–2.574*	(10.019)	0.076
Other	–0.849**	(0.248)	0.428
Nagelkerke R^2		0.093	

Note: † $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

when news items explicitly refer to the elections, but their general presence during the election campaign period decreases. Regarding media platform, the data suggest that inferences are made more often in print news compared to television news. For the analysis of issue topics, political news was used as a reference category. The findings show that, when controlling for medium and time, inferences are most prevalent in hardcore political news, reflected by the mainly negative coefficients. For most issues, this difference is significant. Some issues do not differ significantly from political news but still have a negative value.

Who Infers Public Opinion?

Public opinion can be inferred by several actors, and which actor is the source of the inference is consequential for its ideological meaning and purpose. First, journalists themselves can be the source in a news item, but experts, politicians, and other individuals can also refer to public sentiment in the news. In line with previous research (Brookes et al., 2004; Lewis et al., 2005), the results (see Table 1.4) indicate that journalists made more than 70% of inferences in the news. Politicians do not refer as often to the public in the media (they constitute only 10% of all inferences), or at least, those quotes do not make it to media coverage. This figure is even lower than the 20% found in previous research (Lewis et al., 2005). Experts and other actors (mostly citizens, businesspeople, and celebrities) both make up around 10% of the inferences made in the news. H2, which predicted that most general inferences to public opinion are made by the journalists themselves, was confirmed. Some examples of inferences made by journalists include the following: "*Many people wonder if there was no other option*" (*Eén*, June 21, 2018); "*Working until the age of 67? The Belgian will not have it*" (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, June 12, 2018); "*A fuss has again arisen about a campaign letter*" (*De Standaard*, May 21, 2019); and "*A lot of people consider statements like that to be racist*" (*VTM*, January 15, 2018).

However, H3 predicted some differences for election news. Based on the literature, even when politicians referring to public opinion in their quotes might not be very common in the news in general, during election campaigns they might rely on this type of communication more frequently,

Table 1.4 Sources of reference to public opinion

	N	%
Journalist	495	71.2
Politician	69	9.9
Expert	61	8.8
Other	70	10.1
Total	695	100.0

Table 1.5 Sources of public opinion in election and non-election news

	Non-election news		*Election news*	
	N	%	*N*	%
Journalist	453	75.1*	42	45.7
Politician	30	5.0	39	42.4*
Expert	52	8.6	10	10.9
Other	68	11.3*	1	1.4
Total	621	100.0	74	100.0

Note: *$p < 0.05$; significance level is indicated with the higher value across the two types of news.

as public support for their policies is crucial to getting re-elected. As shown in Table 1.5, which presents the actors referring to public opinion in election and non-election news, large differences between the two types of news are present. If a news item is linked explicitly to the elections, the share of inferences to public opinion that are made by politicians in their statements is more than eightfold compared to non-election news. Thus, indeed, during election campaigns, politicians seem to feel a greater need to legitimize their policies by referring to what the public wants or thinks, or journalists consider it to be more newsworthy, in line with H3. This might also explain the increase in public opinion inferences in election news found in Table 1.3. Compared to older studies focusing on politicians' inferences to public opinion in election news, this is more than twice the share (Brookes et al., 2004). Some examples of quotes given by politicians: *"Those who don't have the same opinions as the left would polarize. The people are tired of this"* (Annick de Ridder, N-VA, *De Standaard*, May 5, 2018); *"The Fleming really likes the idea* [new recycling rules]" (Joke Schauvliege, CD&V, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, May 11, 2018); *"Young people are fed up with the polarization"* (Sammy Mahdi, CD&V, *De Standaard*, May 14, 2018); *"Many Flemish people today feel that they want to delete our culture"* (Bart De Wever, N-VA, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, May 24, 2019).

Who Is Inferred?

For every inference to public opinion, coders examined whether they referred to an entire (or broad or vague) population (e.g., "the Belgians," "everyone," "the British," "people") or a subpopulation. A subpopulation means that the group referred to has certain characteristics or functions that are relevant in the context of the news issue ("students," "parents," "adolescents," "Muslims") or are part of a specific town or area ("people from Antwerp," "inhabitants of Ghent"). Evidently, people belonging to

a subpopulation also belong to the entire population but are referred to within their specific function or location at the time of the news item. The results indicate that the large majority of inferences refer to a broad or vague population (73.9%). Only one out of four inferences (26.1%) refer to a specified subgroup of the population.

The inferences referring to entire populations are of particular interest for this study, so it is worth exploring more in depth how journalists refer to "the" public opinion in the news. Four in ten (40.3%) of the inferences referred to the domestic (Belgian) population, explicitly ("the Belgians") or implicitly (based on the context of the news item). Most of the inferences related to the Belgian population were quite explicit: "The Belgians," "the Belgian population," and "the Flemish" were the most common referrals. A third (34.0%) of the inferences referred to a clearly defined foreign population, which was mostly a generalizing reference to all inhabitants of a country (e.g., "the British," "the French people," "the Iranian population").

Interestingly, for the remaining 25.7% of the referrals, the population is unspecified. Here, the journalists make very broad claims about public opinion that are not specified within a precise country or context ("people," "everyone," "many"). These unspecified inferences carry no requirements about presenting the exact source or nature of public opinion. Most of the unspecified inferences are to "people" (34.8%) and "everyone" (13.6%), without referring to a specific population in the news item, so it is not clear which exact group of people is referred to, and it is also not specified within the context of a specific country (e.g., "*More and more people want to get rid of this* [headscarf] *ban*" [*De Standaard*, May 11, 2018]). Other examples of groups referred to in unspecified references were "citizens" (not of a specific country), "the public opinion," and "society."

Lastly, the study investigated the role of social media in the representation of the public sentiment. That is, how often are people on social media used as the population of public opinion inferences? It does not seem that social media populations have replaced traditional populations: Only 7.5% of all inferences referred to a population on social media. Often these social media references create the impression that they measure a public sentiment broader than only the people present on these social media. Based on statements like these, it is difficult for audiences to get an idea of the size of the group referred to. Examples are as follows: "*What has been the main focus on social media in recent weeks is anger*" (*De Standaard*, May 18, 2019); "*The video was massively shared on social media and caused a lot of fuss*" (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, May 24, 2019); "*That contrast unleashed a storm of protest on social media*" (*De Standaard*, January 15, 2018).

Conclusion

Inferences, which are the most casual references to public opinion in the news, are frequently used in Flemish print and broadcast news. However, some differences do appear based on media platform and time period. In the elite newspaper and on the public service broadcaster, this study captured twice as many inferences to public opinion compared to the popular newspaper and the commercial broadcaster. This might seem surprising, as many previous studies found that citizen sources and human-interest frames are used more often on the latter (Hendriks Vettehen et al., 2005; Kleemans et al., 2017). However, this study not only examines whether citizens are depicted as "passive" subjects of a news item but rather approaches them as active participants in a democracy. The difference between the media platforms could possibly be explained by the watchdog role journalists play, whereby they assess what is happening in the world and in public affairs based on what citizens think and want (Dahlgren & Sparks, 1992; Schultz, 1998; Silverstone, 2013). It might be that the elite newspaper and the public service broadcaster attach more importance to this watchdog function. Public opinion inferences also are most prevalent in highly politicized topics, which can also be linked to this explanation.

In general, journalists themselves are most likely to refer to public opinion in the news. This is understandable, as public opinion inferences are an easy way for journalists to simplify complex issues and indicate the relevance of events. It is not feasible for journalists to provide a validated and complete image of public opinion in every news item. This outcome is in line with other studies looking at general inferences in the news (Lewis et al., 2005). Compared to other public opinion displays such as polls and vox pops, the inferences to public opinion are easy to make for journalists and are a good way to help produce the narrative of their news stories. Also, inferences provide the opportunity for journalists to back up their news stories and legitimize their reporting, as they create the impression that the news agenda is based on civic deliberation. Much research exists concluding that journalists rely mostly on their own assumptions and interpretations when reporting on public opinion (Beckers, 2017; Entman & Paletz, 1981; King & Schudson, 1995; Matthews & Al Habsi, 2018). Sumpter (2000) found journalists and editors to be confident that their interests mirrored those of the man and woman in the street without being tainted by private interests. However, research has shown that journalists might hold misperceptions of the actual public sentiment (Beckers et al., 2021; Jerre, 2013).

Another interesting finding is that, against what would be expected based on populist literature (e.g. Dalton, 2013), quotes of politicians referring to "the public" are not omnipresent in the news. The findings do highlight

a significant increase in public opinion inferences made by politicians in election news. Here, quotes of politicians containing references to public opinion appear eight times as often compared to politicians' quotes in non-election news. This is in line with previous research, concluding that more and more politicians turn to populist communication strategies during election campaigns to legitimize their policies and find public support for their proposed ideas (Bernhard et al., 2015; Schmidt, 2018). It might also be that politicians use references to public opinion all the time but that they become more newsworthy in campaign news. Public opinion becomes most visible and important in election times. Elections are one of the most active manners in which citizens can express their opinions and influence the government or policies. Indeed, there are more public opinion inferences in election news, which might be explained by the finding that politicians refer more to public opinion in their quotes during the election campaign. However, the results of this study reveal more inferences in general (non-election) news in routine year 2018 compared to election year 2019. This seems contradictory, but during election campaigns, other public opinion displays such as polls take the upper hand in news reporting on all topics, as was found in previous studies focusing on election news (Brookes et al., 2004; Searles et al., 2016).

As with any study, some limitations need to be addressed. First, only one media system was studied—the Flemish one. However, the Flemish case is an interesting one to investigate, as it has a strong public service broadcaster and, in general, high-quality news media. This enabled the comparison of different types of media outlets (e.g., commercial broadcaster vs. public service broadcaster), which led to some interesting differences. The results are mostly in line with other content analyses conducted in other countries such as the US and the UK (Lewis et al., 2005). As the last studies on the topic were conducted in the early 2000s, others should study public opinion inferences in different media contexts. Second, the study focused on traditional print and broadcast media and not on online news. However, the main news websites in Flanders are linked to their offline counterparts and, to a great degree, contain similar content. Future research should study inferences in online news, as the presence of social media inferences might differ between online and offline news.

Third, while explicit representations of public opinion such as polls and protests are relatively easy to identify in the news, inferences to public opinion pose a challenge as they are more implicit, which is probably one of the reasons why they have not received much attention in academic research up to now compared to their more explicit counterparts. To identify all public opinion inferences, all coders were trained extensively, and all news items were coded twice. Although time-consuming, this was

crucial for the quality of the data collection. Doing so helps guarantee a satisfactory level of accuracy.

This chapter presented the first systematic analysis of inferences to public opinion in print and television news. The results indicate that inferences about public opinion are frequently used in the news, particularly in elite news media, where they may serve a watchdog function, showing that citizens have a role in the news agenda. Inferences are predominantly made by journalists and probably mostly serve to simplify complex public opinion processes and legitimize news reporting. Unsurprisingly, in election news, inferences are more common and made more often by politicians, as showing that public support for their proposals and policies is crucial during election campaigns. As media reporting of public opinion has been found to influence citizens' judgments, gaining a better understanding of these seemingly trivial inferences might help solve a piece of the puzzle of the role the media play in influencing democratic debates and the current political landscape.

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2 Of Tweets and Frames

Media Coverage of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

Porismita Borah and Rico Neumann

Already in the 1990s, journalism scholars Morris and Ogan (1996) said that "the Internet has become impossible to ignore" (p. 39). Since then, changes in the media landscape and emerging information technologies have influenced how media content is produced and the ways in which people consume media, with broader implications for democracy and democratic institutions (Van Aelst et al., 2017). Prior research examined how journalists use social media in covering elections (e.g., Broersma & Graham, 2012; Lawrence et al, 2014; Vis, 2013) and how politicians have used social media to mobilize groups (Sides et al., 2018) and talk "straight to the people" (Kayam, 2020, p. 149; see also Borah, 2016; Gonawela et al., 2018). In reaching out to their audiences, political leaders have used various communication strategies utilizing different social media platforms, with Barack Obama's 2008 campaign standing out as an example of an early successful use of these tools (Borah, 2016). Candidates' use of social media has since come a long way, with candidates such as Donald Trump employing these platforms not only to reach out to supporters but also increasingly to gain media attention (Wells et al., 2016). Using primarily negative, critical, and self-promotion language (Gonawela et al., 2018; Kayam, 2020), Trump has successfully managed to take control of his messages (Lockhart, 2018). Specifically, his use of Twitter to consistently spread fear and attack groups like Muslims or Mexicans has captured the news cycle and generated significant public attention, which may have contributed to his electoral win in 2016 (Ott & Dickinson, 2019). Even during the primaries, retweets of Trump's posts were a critical factor for predicting his campaign's news coverage (Wells et al., 2016).

In view of today's disrupted public spheres, it is important to rethink and reexamine core concepts to explain reciprocal relations between key actors in the political sphere – the media, publics, and political elites as well as the democratic institutions they represent (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018). Drawing on political communication and journalism scholarship,

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this chapter focuses on the intersection of two key actors within the political sphere: political elites and the media. Specifically, the current chapter seeks to extend this line of inquiry in the context of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Informed by gatekeeping, agenda-setting, and framing theory, the main purposes of the chapter are to examine (1) the use of Twitter as a source in the media coverage of the election campaign and (2) the media content of that coverage to better understand to what extent the media used Twitter as a source and also how they framed those stories and if there was any relationship between the two.

Literature Review

The Elite–Public Nexus: "Straight to the People"

The 2000 U.S. presidential election is considered the first election in which social media tools were used in political campaigns (Bentivegna, 2002). One of the first to be considered successful was Obama's presidential campaign in 2008 (Dalton, 2009; Nagourney, 2008). Since then, politicians have used various strategies to reach their supporters via social media platforms (Borah, 2016; McClelland, 2012), making social media a central feature of contemporary political campaigns (Perlmutter, 2008). Many politicians employ a mix of social media posts that use humor, fear appeals, criticism of their opponents, and other messages to promote themselves and keep their followers informed (Borah, 2016; Gonawela et al., 2018; Kayam, 2020; McClelland, 2012; Sahly et al., 2019). Whatever the message content, platforms like Twitter are increasingly used to bypass conventional media gatekeepers, ranging from simple direct messages (e.g., individual tweets) to logistically more complex interactive online events (e.g., Twitter townhall debates) (Davies, 2015; Eilperin, 2015). Social media may be used to circulate information easily, quickly, and widely without having to rely on conventional media outlets as gatekeepers, fact-checkers, or moderators (Metzgar & Marrugi, 2009, p. 152). As a result of these changing communicative practices and information technologies, political elites become more accessible and more personal (Scacco & Coe, 2016). Against the backdrop of today's fragmented media environment, using platforms like Twitter allows politicians, especially presidents, to narrowcast their messages to specific audiences, thus appealing directly to their support bases (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2016; Jacobs, 2005; Scacco et al., 2018). However, this trend toward narrowcasting is a response not solely to changes in media technologies but also to changes in society with regard to amplifying voices of social groups linked by shared identities, interests, or goals (Coe, 2015). Overall, political elites use these online tools and communicative

practices to exert message control, appeal to their supporters, and garner attention from the media.

The Elite–Media Nexus: Journalists' Use of Twitter as a Source

Political elites' direct messages not only are aimed at specific audiences within the wider public but also contribute to shaping the media agenda. Social media messages often provide the raw material for journalists' stories (Johnson et al., 2018; Lewis & Reese, 2009; Moon & Hadley, 2014). Among all platforms, Twitter has increasingly gained attention by scholars as an information source for traditional mass media outlets in a variety of news contexts, including the environment (e.g., Valenzuela et al., 2017), politics (e.g., Hermida et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2015; Vis, 2013), and health (e.g., Deprez & Van Leuven, 2018; Van Leuven & Deprez, 2017). There is also broad consensus regarding Twitter's strong impact on journalistic practices (e.g., Broersma & Graham, 2013; Gulyás, 2013; Johnson et al., 2018), specifically in terms of information-gathering (e.g., Deprez et al., 2013), agenda-building (e.g., Conway-Silva et al., 2018), gatekeeping (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2014), and fact-checking (e.g., Coddington et al., 2014). Given the constant flow of information, Twitter has created an "awareness system" in which users can obtain information through streams based on their network, thus providing "a mix of news, information and comments, usually connected to current reality, but without an established order" (Hermida, 2012, p. 660). Given its high level of time sensitivity, Twitter is particularly useful for breaking news (Broersma & Graham, 2013), highlighting the power of immediacy as a news value that increasingly shapes journalistic decision-making, news production processes, and thus overall journalistic quality (Karlsson, 2011; Usher, 2018). For example, journalists frequently use Twitter to track breaking news and crowdsource information (Parmelee, 2014), as well as support and illustrate their storytelling (Broersma & Graham, 2013).

The Role of Twitter in Shaping News about the 2016 Presidential Election

The role of social media, particularly Twitter, in shaping the 2016 presidential election has received extensive attention, primarily by media scholars (e.g., Enli, 2017; Wells et al., 2020) but also in areas such as political science (e.g., Francia, 2018; Yaqub et al., 2017) and marketing (e.g., Buccoliero et al., 2020; Cornfield, 2017). Donald Trump, the 2016 Republican candidate, embraced Twitter for a host of activities: Promoting himself; distracting the public from his own negative press coverage; taking revenge on his enemies; and attacking his critics and opponents (Barbaro, 2015;

Lakoff, 2017; Ott & Dickinson, 2019). For example, he often used a combination of those tactics in response to sexual assault allegations made against him; he engaged heavily in "whataboutism" rhetoric, that is, redirecting public and media attention by trying to discredit and attack his opponents with similar criticism (Bollinger et al., 2019).

Similarly, early on the campaign trail, Trump already outnumbered his Republican competitors in terms of using Twitter to attack the credibility of the media and political institutions, ultimately with the goal of undermining public respect and fostering distrust in these institutions (Kenski et al., 2018). This type of incivility discourse was not just the product of the primary campaign but also extended well into his presidency. For instance, Trump frequently engaged in name-calling and other insults using Twitter, typically targeting his critics' voices in the media and in politics (Coe & Park-Ozee, 2020; see also Lee & Quealy, 2019) and perpetuating xenophobia and racism (Finley & Esposito, 2020) as well as sexism and a male-centric hierarchy (Scotto di Carlo, 2020). While elite voices in politics and the media overwhelmingly disapproved of his conduct and performance, especially during the debates, the volume of non-elite social media voices greatly enhanced Trump's chances to succeed with a populist-style, insurgent marketing strategy shaped by blunt, conversational language and confrontational branding (Cornfield, 2017; see also Clarke & Grieve, 2019). More generally, these examples demonstrate how easy and common it has become to spread uncivil and impulsive messages and how public discourse is changing in the age of Twitter (Ott, 2017).

Given the rise in social media and their growing role as news source for many people (Shearer & Mitchell, 2021), politicians are increasingly aware that they need to use these platforms to spread their messages (Kenski & Conway, 2016), thus capturing the attention of the news media. In the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, Twitter – given the sheer number of followers of each party's candidate – was used as a direct source of news by many journalists (Enli, 2017). Not only did Trump's tweets go viral and become sources for reporters, but his followers' support on Twitter also elicited blog posts and news coverage in the mainstream media (Wells et al., 2016). In addition, presidential candidates' Twitter feeds predicted the news agenda on a variety of issues – for example, foreign policy, banking, and health care in case of Trump – but these relationships are often reciprocal and differ for each candidate (Conway-Silva et al., 2018). This highlights the agenda-setting power of social media platforms in shaping mainstream media coverage and suggests that such platforms benefited candidates like Trump, who lacked both experience and background in politics but leveraged his fame and wealth, thus disrupting the conventional "professionalized campaigns" of other candidates (Enli, 2017). Scholars argue that this is because Twitter provides an infrastructure of

incivility and operates based on the logics of spectacle, which contributes to increased personalization in politics and a devaluation of normative democratic discourse (Bratslavsky et al., 2020). In addition, the affordances of the platform make it more likely to spread simple and uncivil messages (Ott, 2017). The chaotic and unorthodox nature of Trump's campaign allowed his team to garner constant attention from the media and thrive on the media narratives generated about his campaign (Kellner, 2016).

The growth of communication technologies has contributed to an information environment in which political actors have become less dependent on the influence of conventional gatekeepers in mainstream media. Much of this line of scholarship is guided by intermedia agenda-setting theory, the idea that news content is transferred between different media (Atwater et al., 1987). While early research focused on transfers between highly reputable news opinion leaders (e.g., *The New York Times*) and smaller, local news outlets (e.g., Breed, 1955), novel forms of co-production of news by citizen actors and political elites have challenged existing notions of intermedia relations (Harder et al., 2017). Ample studies have already indicated Twitter's role in exerting a bottom-up impact on mainstream media output (e.g., Conway et al., 2015; Westerman et al., 2014). The decrease in the media's unique agenda-setting power can be attributed to an increasing abundance of online sources (Conway et al., 2015), journalists' increasingly active engagement in tweeting (Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018; Russell et al., 2015), and Twitter's timeliness in providing information updates (Westerman et al., 2014). Although mainstream media continue to play a dominant role in setting the public's agenda (Luo et al., 2019), the information flow between traditional and social media has become more reciprocal (Conway et al., 2015). These new complexities and conditional effects have been the focus of a growing number of studies. For example, Twitter influences the mainstream media more in case of breaking news (Su & Borah, 2019). Similarly, Twitter has a stronger impact on how journalists cover their stories about disasters rather than the reverse, thus revealing a "reciprocal but asymmetrical" association (Valenzuela et al., 2017, p. 631). To further illuminate the use of Twitter posts of the 2016 presidential candidates as journalists' source, we pose our first research question:

> ***RQ1:*** *What amount of news stories used tweets from Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in their coverage during the time leading to the 2016 presidential election?*

News Framing and Election Coverage

Beyond examining journalists' use of Twitter posts as a source, it is important to understand news patterns of the election coverage itself. As one of the ripest areas of research in political communication (Borah, 2011), news

framing has often been used for this line of research (e.g., Entman, 2010; Esser & D'Angelo, 2003; Gan et al., 2005; Rhee, 1997; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006). Framing involves "selecting and highlighting some facets of events and issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman, 2004, p. 5; see also Gitlin, 1980). Framing is therefore an essential step in content creation, where journalists inevitably utilize news frames to simplify events, maintain interests, and guarantee comprehension of their audience (Valkenburg et al., 1999). News frames in election coverage are considered "the imprint of power" (Gan et al., 2005, p. 443) because framed interpretations of political phenomena may cultivate a specific political reality for audiences to better understand the importance of political figures and their agendas.

Political communication scholars and psychologists have examined a wide variety of ways in which journalists characterize political campaigns, including their audience effects (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Iyengar, 1991; Price et al., 1997; see also Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Within this body of scholarship, strategy and issue frames have been extensively studied (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; de Vreese, 2004; Patterson, 1993; Rhee, 1997). Strategy framing refers to a coverage style that focuses mainly on performance and style, the conflict between candidates, their strategies, "win-or-lose aspects" (Rhee, 1997, p. 30) of their campaigns, and politicians' self-interests (Graber, 1993). Issue framing, however, refers to stories highlighting argumentation, political issues, opinions, decisions, policies, and solutions including their implications, and tends to be more substantive than strategy framing (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1993; Rhee, 1997). Content analyses show that elections are often framed in terms of strategies or as a "horse race." For instance, in a comparison of news coverage of election campaigns in Sweden and the United States, U.S. newspapers were found more likely to use strategy frames, while Swedish newspapers were more likely to employ issue frames (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006).

Strategy and issue frames have been studied using content-analytic designs, and their audience effects have been studied using experimental designs. For example, audiences are more likely to become cynical toward electoral politics and candidates when they are exposed to strategy-framed news (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; de Vreese, 2004; Rhee, 1997). Specifically, they will be "unduly primed to understand campaigning and governance in terms of the motivations and strategies of individual politicians" (D'Angelo et al., 2005, p. 201). However, many of those effects are moderated by an individual's political sophistication and engagement (de Vreese, 2005; Jackson, 2010). In contrast, issue frames can depict politicians or candidates as engaging in constructive political conversations about policies (D'Angelo et al., 2005) and exhibiting rationales

behind various policy alternatives (Lee et al., 2008). Both strategy- and issue-framed newspaper coverage can be effective in influencing campaign interpretations: Those who are exposed to strategy-framed information are inclined to describe campaigns in terms of strategy-oriented political processes, while those who consume issue-framed news tend to focus more on specific issues (Rhee, 1997).

A growing number of studies have examined the framing of the pivotal 2016 presidential election and its effects from a variety of perspectives, particularly against the backdrop of digital media. A large-scale analysis of campaign messages from the 2016 Republican primary candidates reveals that Trump's Twitter communication had by far the highest proportion of strategy frames (followed by John Kasich, the last candidate to exit the race), with nearly twice as many strategy frames than issue frames (Walter & Ophir, 2019). Deemed one of the most negative campaigns in recent history (Patterson, 2016), the 2016 presidential election has attracted much scholarship to better understand strategy framing via negative campaigning (e.g., Gross & Johnson, 2016; Yaqub et al., 2017). In the general election, negative tweets constituted half of the candidates' tweets during the final phase of the presidential campaign, with attack messages garnering more attention in terms of retweeting and attracting favorites, especially those aimed at Clinton and mainstream media (Lee & Xu, 2018). This trend – mostly attacking and denigrating nonconservative (liberal and mainstream) media while occasionally praising conservative outlets – intensified even further during Trump's first year in office (Meeks, 2020).

Many of these discursive patterns – simplification, emotionalization, and informality, among others – fit the media logic regarding populist-style communication (Alvares & Dahlgren, 2016; Bos et al., 2011; Caiani & Graziano, 2016) and have been observed in other political contexts as well (Bracciale & Martella, 2017). Trump's negative campaign messages were also more numerous than Clinton's, utilizing simplification and constant repetition of specific themes and phrases (e.g., emphasizing job loss, terrorism, illegal immigration, and other countries taking advantage of the United States in various ways) to mobilize his conservative base (Liu & Lei, 2018; see also Quam & Ryshina-Pankova, 2016). Negative and fear-based campaign messages were also exemplified by the Trump campaign's use of frames reminiscent of the classic horror genre that aimed at demonizing his opponent and instilling fear in audiences via portrayals of economic decline and uncontrolled immigration. Similarly, the Clinton campaign portrayed Trump as an imminent, existential, evil threat and a likely warmonger, given his temperament and irrationality (Montgomery, 2019). Regardless of the many differences in style and substance, fear and negativity shaped much of the candidates' campaign communication – and

this resonated strongly with many people's sentiments, particularly their fears, insecurities, and concerns (Golshan, 2016). While these studies highlight the predominance of strategy frames in the candidates' social media messages (Rhee, 1997), we assume a similar pattern for news coverage of the election:

> ***H1:*** *The news coverage of the 2016 presidential election consists of a higher number of strategy-framed stories compared to issue-framed stories.*

It is possible that the tweets from the candidates themselves focus on winning and losing of the elections or highlight their policies. Since journalists use the tweets as sources in their stories (Broersma & Graham, 2012, 2013; Metag & Rauchfleisch, 2017), it is also possible that there could be a correlation between the tweets that are used as source and the news frames used in the coverage. To further examine the Twitter messages that were used as source in the news coverage, we pose our last set of research questions:

> ***RQ2:*** *To what extent do the tweets quoted in the articles consist of strategy or issue frames?*

> ***RQ3:*** *What is the association between the volume of tweets quoted and the type of frames used in the articles?*

Methods

The data for the 2016 presidential elections were collected from Nexis Uni. The time period spans from the nomination of the two candidates by their parties (i.e., July 21, 2016, for Trump and July 28, 2016, for Clinton) until election day (November 8, 2016). Every article published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post,* and *USA Today* that included the words "Trump" or "Clinton" at least twice (see Wells et al., 2016) was selected for the analysis.

A total of 4,885 articles were saved from Nexis Uni. Duplicate articles were excluded. The final number of articles was 3,446 (slightly more than 70% of all articles), with 1,757 focusing mostly on Clinton and 1,689 focusing mostly on Trump. Many articles referenced both Clinton and Trump in the same story. Those articles were carefully read and coded as either Clinton coverage or Trump coverage, depending on the primary topic of the story. Two coders completed the coding. Each category was coded as present or absent, except for the open-ended item to record the name(s) of the politician(s) when applicable. Chance-corrected intercoder

reliability was determined using Cohen's kappa (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013) and are noted in parentheses below.

The content was coded for (1) *sources used in the news story* (.81), that is, whether the news story uses a Twitter post from either of the candidates as a source; (2) *references to other politicians* (.89), that is, whether the news story used a Twitter post from any politicians other than the two major candidates; if other politicians' tweets are present, the coders wrote down their names; (3) *news article frames,* that is, whether strategy (.84) or issue (.81) frames were used in the news story; and (4) *tweet frames,* that is, whether strategy (.82) or issue (.78) frames were present in the tweet's content. Specifically, news articles and tweets were coded as containing a strategy frame when the content highlighted the winning and losing aspects of the campaign (Graber, 1993; Rhee, 1997). However, news articles and tweets were coded as issue-framed if the content prioritized political issues, policies, and solutions (Patterson, 1993; Rhee, 1997). Adding the framing variables to the content analysis allows a closer look at the coverage beyond the examination of Twitter as a source.

Results

The first research question focused on the extent to which Twitter was used as a source. The data indicate that one in ten (10.3%; $N = 174$) news articles about Trump used his tweets as a source. In contrast, only a small fraction (1.8%; $N = 31$) of articles about Clinton used her tweets as a source. This difference is statistically significant: χ^2 (1) = 110.67, $p < .001$, $\varphi_c = .18$. Trump's tweets were used far more often as news sources compared to Clinton's tweets.

References to other politicians only played a minor role. Only one in fifteen (6.5%, $N = 226$) news articles used tweets from politicians other than Clinton or Trump, including Republicans like Ted Cruz, John McCain, and Scott Walker, and Democrats like Tim Kaine and Barack Obama. This pattern is also statistically significant: χ^2 (1) = 2599.54, $p < .001$, $w = .87$.[1] This finding indicates that political elites other than Trump were not as commonly invoked.

To test our first hypothesis, which predicted a prevalence of strategy-framed stories over issue-framed stories, we found that overall most stories included strategy frames. Regardless of the candidate, roughly six in ten (56.4%, $N = 1{,}945$) articles used strategy frames and four in ten (38%, $N = 1{,}311$) articles used issue frames.[2] This pattern in framing news about the 2016 election is statistically significant: χ^2 (1) = 123.06, $p < .001$, $w = .19$. H1 is therefore supported: News coverage of the 2016 presidential election consisted of more strategy-framed stories than issue-framed stories.

Specifically, more than half (55%; $N = 966$) of the news articles with a focus on Clinton's campaign used strategy frames, and slightly more articles (58%; $N = 979$) with focus on Trump's campaign used such frames. In contrast, articles that focused on Clinton's campaign were more likely (40%, $N = 702$) than articles that focused on Trump's campaign (36.1%, $N = 609$) to use issue frames. These results indicate that for both candidates, strategy frames were much more common than issue frames. Specifically, the sample included around 50% more strategy-framed than issue-framed stories. However, the discrepancy between the two framing types is larger for Trump (i.e., roughly 60% more strategy- than issue-framed stories) than Clinton (i.e., roughly 40% more strategy- than issue-framed stories). Overall, these differences in news coverage between the two candidates are statistically significant; however, the association between candidate and frame type is only weak: χ^2 (1) = 4.57, $p < .05$, $\varphi_c = .04$.

Finally, to answer the last two research questions, which related to the framing used in both tweets and articles, the content of the tweets used in the coverage of both candidates was also coded for the presence of strategy and issue frames. In the case of Clinton, issue-framed tweets (5.6%, $N = 3$) outweighed strategy-framed ones (2%, $N = 1$). In the case of Trump, the opposite was observed: Strategy-framed tweets (7.4%, $N = 19$) were more common than issue-framed tweets (4.3%, $N = 11$). However, it is important to note that these tweets are not representative of the Twitter posts of the two candidates. Using Fisher's exact test in light of the relatively small sample sizes yields a non-significant result ($p = .28$). These findings are for the tweets that the reporters used as source for their coverage. The interaction between the frames used in the media coverage and the use of Twitter as a source was not significant ($p = .32$).

Discussion

The two main purposes of this research were to understand the use of Twitter as a source in the media coverage of the 2016 presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton and to examine the use of strategy and issue frames in that coverage. In line with prior research (e.g., Broersma & Graham, 2013; Hermida, 2012), this study's findings show that tweets from politicians are often used by the media as a source of information. However, the attention given to Donald Trump's tweets is much higher than that given to Hillary Clinton's. Prior research has shown that political candidates use Twitter to reach their supporters, often bypassing the media (Borah, 2016; Gonawela et al., 2018; Kayam, 2020; McClelland, 2012; Sahly et al., 2019), for example, when it comes to updating one's followers about campaign events (Walter & Ophir, 2019). In sum, these social media

platforms are invaluable tools for politicians. They can reach voters *and* gather attention from the media.

The media's interest in Trump's Twitter posts is not a surprise, further highlighting his effectiveness in using Twitter during the primaries (Wells et al., 2016) and the general election campaign (Yaqub et al., 2017). Trump primarily used negative content in which he often criticized others or used posts to promote himself (Gonawela et al., 2018; Gross & Johnson, 2016; Kayam, 2020). For example, an article from *The New York Times* (Confessore, 2016) referenced Trump's Twitter communication when discussing his taxes. Multiple tweets from Trump were used as examples to show how he criticized other politicians. In one tweet, he alleged that former President Barack Obama wanted to raise taxes and made false claims that Obama had not paid his taxes. The story also included a tweet from Trump when he posted a picture of himself near a stack of papers asking, "Isn't this ridiculous?" Trump also continuously attacked his direct opponent on Twitter. For instance, another article in *The New York Times* about Trump's tax returns (Haberman & Fandos, 2016) included Trump's tweets attacking Clinton. In one tweet, he proclaimed, "I have created tens of thousands of jobs and will bring back great American prosperity. Hillary has only created jobs at the FBI and DOJ!" Another instance illustrating the use of self-promotion and media attack occurred when Trump hit back at *The New York Times* after a copy of his previously undisclosed 1995 income tax records was published: "I know our complex tax laws better than anyone who has ever run for president and am the only one who can fix them." Tweets like these, offered in regular doses to draw and sustain audiences' attention via sensationalist, populist, and outrageous claims, exemplify Trump's effectiveness in playing to the contemporary communication environment (Wells et al., 2020).

The media's coverage of his tweets gave Trump's posts a much larger audience. Trump's identification as the anti-establishment candidate was loud and clear in this tweet: "The media and establishment want me out of the race so badly – I WILL NEVER DROP OUT OF THE RACE, WILL NEVER LET MY SUPPORTERS DOWN! #MAGA" (Rappeport, 2016). Thus, Trump got an even bigger audience when his tweets were used in media reports. This was not the case with Clinton or even with other politicians who were quoted. These findings suggest that Trump was able to set the agenda for part of his mainstream media coverage (e.g., Su & Borah, 2019; Valenzuela et al., 2017). Most recently, Twitter suspended Donald Trump's account along with multiple other accounts due to his spreading election-fraud conspiracy theories in the United States. Research shows that disinformation went down by 73% after these suspensions (Dwoskin & Timberg, 2021), suggesting that deplatforming can be an effective means for news media organizations. Giving a platform to political

leaders who spread conspiracy beliefs via mainstream media channels is dangerous, to say the least. Despite a long line of literature that is critical of the impact of strategy frames (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; de Vreese, 2004; Rhee, 1997), this study's results also demonstrated that strategy frames still dominated the election coverage in 2016. The tweets that journalists quoted showed that Trump used a slightly higher number of "strategic" tweets compared to those that focused on issue frames. This is also in line with computational analyses of Trump's tweets demonstrating that strategy frames were about twice as common as issue frames among the tweets he sent during the Republican primaries (Walter & Ophir, 2019).

As with all research, the current study comes with some caveats. First, this content analysis systematically examines Twitter as a source and the frames used in the coverage by three leading U.S. newspapers. Shifting the focus to the candidates' Twitter (and other forms of social media) communications, including those messages that do not garner media attention, will provide a better understanding of strategy and issue framing from the viewpoint of the messenger. Second, while the three newspapers used for our analysis are circulated nationwide and have a long-standing presence in the U.S. news market, future research could expand the focus onto other media sources, including cable news and digital-only news formats. Third, using triangulated approaches, interviews with the journalists themselves could further illuminate the use of content generated by political elites, including individual source preferences and organizational factors that enable or constrain news selection processes when reporting news about political candidates. Fourth, while this study provides a quantitative yet exploratory look at the news media coverage and journalistic use of Twitter messages, a more qualitatively oriented in-depth examination of such content will be able to identify some of the nuances in that coverage. Lastly, we hope future research will continue this line of research, especially with regard to the contentious 2020 elections, which redefined the role of social media companies against the backdrop of a steep increase in users worldwide (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019), rising waves of disinformation and misinformation (Bond, 2020), and growing divisions within U.S. society (Dimock & Wike, 2020). The media have often been called out to give less attention to Trump and the misinformation he spreads via platforms such as Twitter. Such an analysis will be able to tell if mainstream media continued to give him attention in the 2020 elections.

Despite these limitations, the current chapter provides insights into how journalists from leading newspapers in the United States covered the presidential candidates in the 2016 elections. The findings add to the research on the use of social media as a source by journalists (Enli, 2017; Wells et al., 2016) as well as the framing of elections (Aalberg et al., 2016; Entman, 2010; Rhee, 1997; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006). This study presents

empirical evidence that Trump's Twitter communication received far more attention by the media than Clinton's and that the media coverage of presidential elections continues to employ more strategy than issue frames. To conclude, while this study focuses on the intersection of political elites and news media, other questions regarding the public remain, including how individuals process and use this type of information in their own political decision-making in view of disrupted public spheres and increasingly complex media environments.

Notes

1 Effect size calculation based on Cohen (1988).
2 The remaining 190 articles (5.5%) did not include either of the frames.

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3 Are "Nasty Women" Funny Women? Selective Appreciation and Perception of Feminist Political Satire in *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*

Erin Drouin and Dannagal Goldthwaite Young

Ample research has explored the appeal and effects of political humor, answering questions such as who finds political humor funny, how audiences comprehend it, and what effects it has on viewers' attitudes and beliefs (Attardo, 2009; Hmielowski et al., 2011; LaMarre et al., 2009; Young, 2004; 2008; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Central to discussions of humor comprehension and interpretation are cognitive processes related to selective perception. Rooted in cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), research on selective perception explores the ways in which audiences selectively interpret media content in a manner consistent with their pre-existing beliefs. Increasingly, scholars interested in the psychology and effects of political satire are recognizing the central role played by these selectivity processes in the face of humorous stimuli (LaMarre et al., 2009; Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974). The current project seeks to expand this area of research to examine selective appreciation and comprehension of a particular subcategory of political humor: feminist political satire.

Literature Review

Feminist Humor and Satire

While feminism as a cultural movement has been visible in the United States for more than a century, feminism and feminist themes have become especially salient in American society in recent years. From the Women's Marches on Washington in 2017 and 2018 to the #MeToo movement recognizing the epidemics of sexual assault and harassment in various industries, feminist themes have become part of the national conversation. According to Moi (1988), feminism is "the struggle against all forms of

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patriarchal and sexist oppression. Such an oppositional definition posits feminism as the necessary resistance to patriarchal power" (p. 5). While feminism is a philosophy discussed by writers, scholars, and activists, it is also a theme explored in various forms of popular culture, including feminist humor and satire.

Feminist humor has a rich and varied history, from the early days of Phyllis Diller playfully poking fun at domestic life (Harris, 2012) to Lucille Ball who defied "gender roles, doing physical, slapstick comedy" (Horowitz, 1997, p. x). This trend evolved well into the 2000s, with more female-led comedies featuring feminist themes, this time in obvious and intentional ways. *30 Rock, Parks and Recreation, Girls,* and *The Mindy Project,* respectively led by Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Lena Dunham, and Mindy Kaling, all mark a potential for leading feminist characters in comedy: characters who even refer to themselves as feminists (Swink, 2017).

The term "satire," though, holds a specific meaning, namely, operating in the state of play to engage in a substantive critique of a target – whether it be an institution, policy, practice, or category of people (Test, 1991). In today's rich media landscape, the weekly satire program *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* bills itself as a late-night political satirical television program that prioritizes a feminist perspective. Premiering in 2016 and still airing as of 2020, individual segments of every *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* episode are available on YouTube. Show segments are divided into themes and feature jokes and responses to other content, such as field interviews with elected officials and news segments (Poniewozik, 2016). *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* is distinct from other satire shows hosted by Bee's male counterparts like John Oliver, Trevor Noah, or Seth Meyers. Bee stands in front of the camera, not obscured by a desk, and does not feature studio interviews with weekly guests (Blay, 2016a). Most notably, Bee and her writers place feminist themes at the center of the show, dealing with issues related to reproductive health, rape, and gender pay gap (Morris, 2016). The show has garnered critical acclaim, and Bee has established herself as the "the lone female host in late-night" (Poniewozik, 2016).

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* has become especially relevant, as evidenced by the increase in the number of threats received by the host after criticizing President Trump's administration and policies. Following the 2016 election, Bee recalls immediately becoming the target of anti-feminist ire, stating, "I could feel me personally being a target. ... It was vicious right out of the gate. And in that moment I kind of understood the way it was going to be from then on" ("Samantha Bee on Trump's Win: 'I Could Feel This Seismic Shift,'" 2017). Viewers, however, have responded positively toward the mainstreaming of explicitly feminism themes throughout Trump's presidency, with some calling it "feminist church" (Blake, 2017).

The Psychology of Humor: Appreciation and Comprehension

For decades, scholars have sought to understand how and why people find certain things funny, specifically how the mind works when processing humor (Attardo, 2009). One popular theory of humor is that of incongruity (Koestler, 1964). According to incongruity theory, when people are presented with two independently perceived pieces of information, also known as "matrices," there are three potential results: The matrices collide, resulting in laughter; they fuse into an intellectual thought; or they stimulate a confrontation of ideas. Humor involves those matrices or frames of reference colliding – and thus being dissociated with one another. In the context of satire, this collision is typically between two opposing realities: one that presents our own behavior and another offering a picture of the "ideal" or what "ought to be" (Meredith & Bergson, 1956). Through this, assuming that the satirical text is comprehended as intended by the message producer, audience members come to recognize the prejudices, hypocrisy, or wrongdoing highlighted by the text.

Humor appreciation is a two-stage process: First, recipients experience a humorous situation that does not meet their expectation by the end of the joke (incongruity), and second, the recipients activate relevant information from long-term memory to reconcile the incongruity and hence perceive the humor (Suls, 1972). Because of the cognitive contribution required to understand a joke, humor appreciation and comprehension depend on a listener's ability and motivation to use cognitive mechanisms to reconcile the incongruity and understand a joke. In other words, listeners need to *want* to get a joke and *be able* to get a joke (Attardo, 2009).

Appreciation of humor is also affected by audience's perceptions of the joke's source and target. According to disposition theory, humor appreciation depends upon an audience's view of a "joke protagonist" specifically, "humor appreciation is facilitated when the respondent feels antipathy or resentment towards disparaged protagonists and impaired when he feels sympathy or liking for these protagonists" (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976, p. 93). When examining political humor and disposition theory, findings support the notion that prior disposition can greatly influence humor appreciation and can even affect political values (Becker, 2014).

In the context of feminist humor, research suggests that jokes with feminist themes and arguments are more likely to be appreciated and watched by people who share a feminist belief system (Gallivan, 1992; Stillion & White, 1987). This would suggest that feminist humor appreciation is dependent upon the gender-related attitudes, beliefs, and values that are strongly embedded in our identities (Valentine et al., 2017). As such, these gender-related attitudes will most certainly factor into selective perception processes, with people likely to interpret information based on their

preconceived notions of gender equity. And finally, given that feminist humor often comes from female comics, it is important to note that research suggests that female comics are often assumed to be less funny than their male counterparts regardless of the content of humor (Hooper et al., 2016). Importantly, this finding holds for both male and female audience members (Bore, 2010).

Selective Perception and Comprehension of Humor

Comprehension and appreciation of feminist humor are complicated due to the capacity for subtle or implicit satire to be selectively perceived – or interpreted – by the audience. Selective perception is grounded in the hypothesis that "a person's attitudes and values will affect that person's perception or interpretation of social stimuli" (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974, p. 38). Put simply, our pre-existing beliefs shape the way that we process incoming information – even humorous information (Raney, 2004). These processes of motivated reasoning are designed to protect our egos and reinforce our pre-existing worldview.

Such processes are revealed in a study of appreciation and comprehension of the satirical program *The Colbert Report*, hosted by liberal actor Stephen Colbert, who appears in character as a conservative blowhard pundit (LaMarre et al., 2009). In each line of the show, Colbert's character states the opposite of what Colbert (the actor) really means. Thus, keeping with the definition of Burgers et al. (2011), Colbert's program constitutes irony as it presents "an utterance with a literal evaluation that is implicitly contrary to its intended evaluation" (p. 190).

When college students were assigned to watch an ironic interview hosted by Colbert, the conservative students assumed that he was conservative, while the liberal students concluded (correctly) that Colbert was a liberal. Most importantly, though, both groups found the clip equally funny. It was in their interpretation of Colbert's actual argument – the judgment he was issuing – that the partisans differed (LaMarre et al., 2009). These findings were consistent with a second study that examined online discussion forums centering on Colbert's show. While some participants recognized Colbert's ironic intent, others simply viewed the show as being conservative in argument and judgment (Mohammed, 2014).

Both studies echo the takeaway of a landmark study by Vidmar and Rokeach (1974) on selective perception of Archie Bunker. As the lead character in Norman Lear's popular and critically acclaimed 1970s sitcom *All in the Family*, Bunker was intended to be the racist, misogynist butt of the jokes in the program. However, the authors found that audience members believed that Archie Bunker was either a satirical character or not, depending upon their pre-existing political beliefs. People with racist views saw

Archie as the hero, and those who held progressive views on race saw Archie as a fool. In other words, partisans selectively perceived the character in terms of their own political leanings.

The prevalence of selective perception in the context of humor can be explained in part by the fact that viewers are motivated to appreciate humorous content and laugh along with it. Viewers typically have a more positive reaction toward the satirized subject matter when they find the satire humorous. Viewers are also less likely to counterargue satirical content (Boukes et al., 2015; Nabi et al., 2007; Young, 2008) than they are to counterargue argument-equivalent content presented seriously. Because viewers are motivated to "get the joke" and dedicate resources to that goal, they are less likely to critique the arguments being advanced through the joke. This speaks to the fact that audiences are highly motivated to "get" humor – to appreciate and enjoy it. With such high motivation to appreciate a joke, it would follow that audiences are motivated to adapt the meaning of the joke to match their own political and social beliefs – in order to find it funny and experience mirth (Zillman & Cantor, 1976). We anticipate that like other forms of political humor, feminist humor is likely to be understood through the lens of selective perception, with people interpreting feminist jokes in a manner consistent with their pre-existing beliefs related to gender equity.

Turning to humor *comprehension,* a key predictor of how well people understand incoming information is the availability of relevant knowledge structures and concepts in working memory (Attardo, 2009). When comprehending political or social satire, having the appropriate knowledge structures available depends heavily on the cognitive habits and pre-existing attitudes of the audience. Knowledge structures that are rarely used are hard to access and are typically disorganized. Knowledge structures that are used a lot are easy to access and well-organized. In other words, when it comes to the audience's likely ability to comprehend satire that mocks racism, the availability and accessibility of constructs related to institutional biases against people of color are going to be paramount. If, instead of those mental models, one has mental models available that confirm racial stereotypes, it is easy to see how audiences might draw upon the "incorrect" knowledge to "get a joke." Similarly, in the context of feminist humor, the availability and accessibility of constructs related to feminism, equal rights, and patriarchy are going to be important predictive factors that shape accurate joke comprehension.

Irony versus Hyperbole in Selective Perception Processes

The Colbert and Archie Bunker studies described above illustrate how largely *ironic* satire increases the likelihood that an audience will engage in

selective perception. Ironic humor is that in which the literal expression and the intended interpretation and meaning of the satire are at odds (Burgers et al. 2011). Irony is inherently ambiguous (see LaMarre et al., 2009) and, as such, likely contributes to cognitive-consistency-seeking selectivity processes. But irony is not the only rhetorical structure used in the presentation of political satire. In the case of *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, Bee employs a variety of styles of humor in delivering her political and feminist jokes. Bee's humor can be described as *both* ironic (saying the opposite of what she means) and hyperbolic (using exaggeration and heightened language to express her point literally).

Irony is a complex form of discourse that involves various levels of cognitive processing (Giora & Fein, 2009). Misinterpretation often occurs when listeners of verbal irony take the literal evaluation and fail to recognize the ironic intent. This results in the listeners failing to invert the meaning of the statement, hence taking its meaning literally rather than ironically. This is likely due to confusion with context and source cues because "without clear source cues to signal intent, more readers are prone to misread irony, interpreting it and sharing it with others as real" (Young, 2017, p. 1).

Hyperbole is different from irony as it is "a more explicit type of humor, through which the deliverer's message is presented in an overstated, literal, form" (Young et al., 2019, p. 136). As suggested by Young et al. (2019), "hyperbole, then, would seem to involve a lower reliance on complex cognitive processes, as the intended meaning is literal and explicit, requiring less cognitive work to understand it" (p. 136). The result, it would seem, is a form of humor that is less likely to be misinterpreted than irony and hence less likely to suffer from the biases of selective perception.

In her show, Samantha Bee uses both irony and hyperbole in her presentation of feminist satire. Feminist irony is often used throughout the show, either to describe oppression of women as though it is "just fine" or to describe commonsense policies that support women's rights as "outlandish" or "evil." For example, Bee often uses irony to display her criticism toward the patriarchy. In a segment on her April 26, 2016, episode titled "Twenty-Dollar Tubman," Bee responds to criticism about the addition of Harriet Tubman to the twenty-dollar bill. Ironically, she states, "When we make such a dramatic change to something that no one ever looks at, we have to consider the fragile feelings of white men who tragically appear on only seven out of seven bills currently in production." To understand this segment, the listener must invert the meaning behind Bee's words instead of taking it literally. The literal interpretation would imply that men are not adequately represented on currency.

While Bee often says the opposite of what she means in the context of her feminist segments (which constitutes irony), she also employs hyperbole to heighten a situation through analogy and metaphor. In a June 28,

2017, episode, for example, Bee used hyperbole to address reproductive rights in a segment titled "Last Call for Nasty Women." The segment featured a clip of a woman who lives in Southern California having to cross the border into Mexico to receive health care. Bee responds:

> Okay, skipping down to Mexico for discount cosmetic surgery is one thing, but forcing women to go through border control to hear their baby's heartbeat is another. It's like Republicans are trying to turn gynecological care into Louboutins: an uncomfortable luxury that only rich ladies can buy ... If I know anything about the Trump family, it won't be long before Ivanka's jewelry collection gets repurposed as a line of IUDs.

Unlike irony, the content and meaning of the joke here are sincere and do not require the inversion of valence; the humor is simply aggrandized through metaphor and analogy. The idea that jewelry is repurposed into IUDs (intrauterine devices) is ridiculous and exaggerated, but it conveys the intent of the joke: that Republicans are attempting to make women's health care something of a luxury. Due to the ludicrous hyperbole of this joke, it does not lend itself to misinterpretation in the same way as its ironic counterparts.

Hypotheses

This research seeks to address how gender, political ideology, and attitudes about gender equity shape feminist humor appreciation and comprehension. First, due to research on disposition theory, we anticipate that:

> ***H1.*** *Feminist humor (both hyperbolic and ironic) will be appreciated most among (a) liberals (compared to conservatives), (b) women (compared to men), and (c) people with higher attitudes toward gender equity (compared to those with lower attitudes toward gender equity).*

We also anticipate, consistent with selective perception processes:

> ***H2.*** *Comprehension of feminist humor would be greater among (a) liberals (than conservatives), (b), women (than men), (c) and those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity (than those with lower scores).*

Next, based on past research on the subtle and complex nature of irony, we anticipate that the *ironic* feminist humor will be more open to misinterpretation than the more literal, didactic, *hyperbolic* feminist humor. Given the complexity of irony, and the multiple stages of processing involved in

irony comprehension and appreciation, we also anticipate that the lowest levels of joke comprehension and appreciation should be found among those whose pre-existing beliefs might operate in opposition to feminist themes (men, conservatives, and those who score lowest in gender equity beliefs) *and* who are exposed to the ironic feminist humor.

> ***H3.*** *The effects of ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity on appreciation and comprehension of feminist humor are moderated by humor type. Specifically, the negative effects of gender, conservatism, and low gender equity beliefs on humor comprehension and appreciation should be greater in the ironic condition than in the hyperbolic condition.*

Methodology

A three-condition between-subjects experiment was embedded in an online survey administered to a sample of undergraduates at a large mid-Atlantic university enrolled in a public speaking course in the business school ($N = 192$). The survey was administered between March 2, 2018, and March 9, 2018. The average age of participants was 19.81 years ($SD = .95$); 51% of respondents were male; 77.1% of participants were white. One-third (33.2%) of participants self-identified as extremely liberal, liberal, or somewhat liberal; 31.8% identified as moderate; and the remaining 32.3% identified as somewhat conservative, conservative, or extremely conservative. In terms of partisanship, 17.7% of the sample identified as a Democrat or strong Democrat, whereas 49% of the sample identified as independent or independent that leans Democratic or Republican. The remaining 24.5% self-identified as Republican or strong Republican.

Participants were randomly assigned to view a short online video, which constituted one of three experimental conditions. One condition featured Samantha Bee using irony to express feminist satire ($N = 66$), one condition featured her using hyperbole to express feminist satire ($N = 61$), and a control clip featured her using a generic humor structure in a more interview-based segment about a non-feminist issue, Brexit ($N = 65$). (See Appendix A for full stimuli.) To verify that randomization was successful, a one-way ANOVA comparing means of these three main variables (ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity) by experimental condition was run. Results showed no significant correlations between conditions and any of these three variables (see Appendix A).

Experimental Stimuli

The ironic segment "The Greatest Feminists in Feminism Herstory Hall of Fame" is from the January 18, 2017, episode of *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*. The clip features Bee using ironic jokes to feature flaws in Kellyanne

Conway's construction as a feminist and inducts her to the "Feminism Herstory Hall of Fame." The hyperbolic segment, titled "Heir to the White House Throne," is from the April 5, 2017, episode of *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*. Here, Bee uses hyperbole to criticize Ivanka Trump's role in the White House and her construction as a feminist. Both clips will be edited for length and to remove any extraneous jokes or clips. The control segment is titled "Praise the (Time) Lord" and is from the June 27, 2016, show. It features a clip discussing Donald Trump and the Brexit vote and features Scottish television star David Tennant reading tweets about Donald Trump (see Appendix B for full details of experimental stimuli). As a manipulation check, a pilot study was conducted one month prior to the experiment using trained undergraduate coders (N = 17). Results confirmed that trained coders rated the ironic video as more ironic than the hyperbolic video and the hyperbolic video as more hyperbolic than the ironic video. Results also confirmed that participants more often than not identified the correct meaning of both the ironic and the hyperbolic clips.[1]

Measures

Following exposure to the experimental manipulation, participants completed a post-test survey. Immediately after the clip, they were asked items to measure their appreciation and comprehension of the clip they had just viewed.

Humor appreciation. Participants were asked how closely they thought the following words or phrases described the clip they had just viewed (from extremely well [5] to not well at all [1]): funny (M = 3.29, SD = 1.15), entertaining (M = 3.43, SD = 1.09), enjoyable (M = 3.19, SD = 1.14), interesting (M = 3.34, SD = 1.04), and smart (M = 3.04, SD = 1.04). These five items were averaged to create a mean appreciation construct (α = .92, M = 3.25, SD = .95).

Humor comprehension. Following assessments of humor appreciation, participants were issued two separate items to capture comprehension. First, they were asked to rate how accurate they found two competing interpretations of the overall *segment* they had just watched: one featuring the inverted meaning of the clip and one featuring the literal meaning of the clip. For each segment viewed, participants were asked to evaluate the accuracy of a statement in describing the segment; responses ranged from "not accurately at all" (1) to "very accurately" (5) (see Table 3.1 for M and SD). Next, participants were provided the text of one of the *jokes* made in the clip that illustrated the underlying humor structure used in that condition. Respondents were provided the literal and inverted interpretation of the joke and, again, were asked to how accurately each one represented the argument being made in that particular joke, from "very accurately" to "not accurately at all."

Table 3.1 Means and standard deviations for comprehension accuracy scores

	Accurate segment interpretation		*Inaccurate segment interpretation*		*Accurate joke interpretation*		*Inaccurate joke interpretation*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Ironic	2.29	1.19	2.89	1.19	1.86	0.70	2.92	1.41
Hyperbolic	2.59	1.09	3.11	1.20	1.89	1.12	3.49	1.19
Control	2.14	0.98	3.03	1.16	2.03	1.14	2.71	1.25

Attitudes about Gender Equity. To measure attitudes about gender equity, participants were asked to answer questions from Renzetti's (1987) Sex Role Attitudinal Inventory. The scale divides 24 questions into four subsets: nine statements indicating traditional attitudes toward gender roles, five statements indicating feminist attitudes, four statements indicating awareness about gender inequity, and six statements indicating attitudes toward the women's movement. Participants were asked to indicate agreement with these statements on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 5). Some sample statements asked participants the extent to which they agreed with statements like, "For a woman, marriage should be more important than a career" (reverse-coded), "A wife should willingly take her husband's name at marriage" (reverse-coded), "If there is a military draft, both men and women should be included in it," and "I consider myself to be a feminist," among many others (Renzetti, 1987) (alpha = .88, M = 3.46, SD = .52).

Gender. Respondents were asked "Which of the following best describes your gender identity?" and were given the option to choose between male (coded as 1), female (coded as 0), transgender, or other. No participants selected as other or transgender (M = .52, SD = .5).

Political ideology. Participants were asked in general how they would describe their political views. Responses ranged from "very liberal" (coded 1) to "very conservative" (coded 7) (M = 3.93, SD = 1.47).

Party identification. Participants were asked, "In politics today, do you consider yourself a strong Democrat [coded as 1] to a strong Republican [coded as 7]?" (M = 4.41, SD = 1.75).

Age. Participants were asked, "What is your age?" The age range was from 18 to 22 (M = 19.81, SD = .95).

Race. To assess racial identity, participants were then asked, "What is your racial identity – check all that apply" and given the option to select: African American or Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, Multiracial, Native American, White or Caucasian, and other. A dummy variable for indicating white (coded 1) versus non-white (coded 0) was created (M =.77, SD = .42).

Political interest. In an attempt to gauge familiarity with politics, participants were asked, "In general, how interested are you with what's going on in politics and public affairs?" They could respond to a Likert item ranging from "extremely interested" (coded as 4) to "not at all interested" (coded as 1) (M = 2.67, SD = .82).

Familiarity with Full Frontal. To assess their engagement with *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, participants were asked how familiar they were with Bee (M = 3.11, SD = .98) from "extremely familiar" (coded as 1) to "not familiar at all" (coded as 4), as well as how many times they had viewed her programming. Responses ranged from "never" (1) to "consistently" (4) (M = 1.38, SD =.67).

Results

H1 posited that feminist humor (both hyperbolic and ironic) would be appreciated more among (a) liberals (compared to conservatives), (b) women (compared to men), and (c) people with higher attitudes toward gender equity (compared to those with lower attitudes toward gender equity). To understand the relative predictive power of gender, ideology, and gender equity beliefs on humor appreciation in the face of sociodemographic controls, the data were first limited to the feminist humor conditions only, and a regression was run predicting humor appreciation (see Table 3.2).

Results indicate that appreciation of feminist humor was greatest among liberals, men, and non-whites. Hence, the data show support for H1a, as liberals were more appreciative of feminist humor than conservatives. However, the data do not show support for H1b and, in fact, indicate that men were more appreciative of feminist humor than women. No significant

Table 3.2 Regression testing main effects of individual characteristics on appreciation of feminist humor (irony and hyperbole only)

Variables	*B*	*(S.E.)*	*Beta*
(Constant)	2.77	(1.75)	
Male	.55	(0.17)**	.29
White	–.46	(0.20)*	–.19
Age	.02	(0.07)	.02
Ideology	–.18	(0.07)**	–.29
Party	–.06	(0.05)	–.11
Attitudes about gender equity	.35	(0.19)	.19
Adjusted R^2		218	

Note: N = 127; # p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01.

effects of attitudes about gender equity on humor appreciation were found in the data, indicating H1c was not confirmed.

H2 posited that comprehension of feminist humor would be higher among (a) liberals than conservatives, (b) women than men, and (c) those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity than those with lower scores. Again, data were limited to the feminist humor conditions only (N = 127). First, to capture the accuracy of respondents' interpretations, we created two unique comprehension measures. Recall that respondents were asked how accurately two different interpretations of the *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* segment described the argument made in the video. We subtracted participants' accuracy rating of the *inaccurate* interpretation from their accuracy rating of the *accurate* interpretation. Thus, respondents who properly identified that the accurate interpretation as *very* accurate and the inaccurate interpretation as *very* inaccurate would have a high value on this score, while those failing to properly rate the accuracy of these two interpretations would have lower scores. We then created a parallel subtraction measure for the accurate and inaccurate interpretations of the *individual joke* pulled from the video as well. This allowed us to have two different measures of comprehension (accuracy of full segment and accuracy of joke).

Next, two regression models were run (see Table 3.3), one predicting comprehension of the overall feminist segments and another predicting comprehension of the specific joke segment obtained from those segments. Across both models, none of the sociodemographic predictors were significantly related to comprehension, measured in the context of both the overall segment and the specific joke. Hence, there was no

Table 3.3 Regression testing main effects of individual characteristics on comprehension accuracy of feminist humor (irony and hyperbole only)

	Comprehension accuracy for full segment			*Comprehension accuracy for joke*		
Variable	*B*	*(S.E.)*	*Beta*	*B*	*(S.E.)*	*Beta*
(Constant)	–3.14	(3.21)		1.00	(3.54)	
Male	.13	(0.31)	.04	.06	(0.34)	.02
White	.40	(0.38)	.09	.72	(0.41)	.15
Age	–.09	(0.14)	–.05	–.20	(0.15)	–.11
Ideology	–.21	(0.13)	–.17	–.21	(0.14)	–.17
Party identification	.09	(0.09)	.09	–.15	(0.10)	.15
Attitudes about gender equity	1.69	(0.35)**	.45	1.11	(0.39)**	.31
Adjusted R^2		.25			.13	

Note: N = 127; *p < .05; **p < .01.

confirmatory evidence in support of H2a or H2b, which hypothesized that comprehension would be greater among liberals than conservatives and among women than men.

However, attitudes about gender equity (H2c) were a significant predictor in both models; that is, attitude toward gender equity was a significant predictor of comprehension of the overall feminist humor segments and comprehension of the specific jokes within those segments. Those with higher scores on attitudes about gender equity were especially adept at identifying the accurate meaning of the feminist humor in comparison to those with lower gender equity belief scores.

Next, H3 posited that these relationships between individual characteristics and (a) humor appreciation and (b) comprehension would be moderated by humor type. According to H3, the positive effects of female gender, liberal ideology, and high gender equity beliefs on humor comprehension and appreciation should be even greater in the ironic condition than in the hyperbolic condition. According to this logic, irony should exacerbate processes of selective appreciation and comprehension compared to hyperbole.

Before testing the conditional hypotheses in H3, we sought to understand the main effects of humor type on appreciation and comprehension. The first model predicted humor appreciation with a dummy-coded variable for humor type (dummy variables for the ironic and control conditions, with the hyperbolic condition as the reference group) and sociodemographic and gender equity belief-related control variables. When comparing the effects of both the ironic condition and the control against the hyperbolic condition, and while controlling for sociodemographic variables, the results indicate that men, non-whites, liberals, and those with greater gender equity beliefs showed greater humor appreciation than women, whites, conservatives, and those with lower gender equity beliefs (Table 3.4). However, there were no significant effects of humor structure (irony or control versus hyperbole) on humor appreciation.

Next, to assess the main effects of humor type on humor comprehension, regressions were run predicting comprehension accuracy in the context of both the overall segments and individual jokes from those segments. Predictors in the models included ideology, gender, attitudes about gender equity, sociodemographic variables, and dummy-coded variables for the ironic and control conditions compared to the hyperbolic condition. Results (see Table 3.5) indicate no significant differences in humor appreciation as a function of experimental condition, hence indicating that comprehension did not vary by ironic or hyperbolic humor. However, like the earlier models predicting appreciation of feminist humor, attitudes toward gender equity were significantly positively related to both measures of humor comprehension.

Table 3.4 Predicting appreciation of segments across humor structures (with the hyperbolic condition as comparison) as a function of gender, ideology, and gender equity

Variable	*B*	*(S.E.)*	*Beta*
(Constant)	3.59	(1.47)	
Male	.38	(0.14)**	.20
White	–.50	(0.16)**	–.21
Age	–.05	(0.07)	–.05
Ideology	–.13	(0.06)*	–.21
Party	–.08	(0.04)	–.14
Attitudes about gender equity	.46	(0.15)**	.25
Ironic condition	.06	(0.15)	.03
Control condition	.04	(0.15)	.02
Adjusted R^2		0.22	

Note: $N = 192$; $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$.

Table 3.5 Main effects of comprehension accuracy dependent on humor conditions as a function of gender, ideology, and gender equity

	Accurate segment interpretation			*Accurate joke interpretation*		
Variable	*B*	*(S.E.)*	*Beta*	*B*	*(S.E.)*	*Beta*
(Constant)	–1.75	(2.73)		.21	(2.97)	
Male	–.04	(0.26)	–.01	.05	(0.29)	.01
White	.26	(0.30)	.06	.53	(0.33)	.11
Age	–.11	(0.12)	–.06	–.11	(0.13)	–.06
Ideology	–.10	(0.09)	–.09	–.22	(0.12)	–.17
Party identification	–.06	(0.08)	–.06	.11	(0.09)	.10
Attitudes about gender equity	1.40	(0.28)**	.41	1.02	(0.31)**	.29
Ironic condition	.14	(0.29)	.04	–.50	(0.31)	–.13
Control condition	.63	(0.29)*	.17	.80	(0.31)**	–.20
Adjusted R^2		.22			.15	

Note: $N = 192$;$^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$.

H3 predicted that humor type would moderate the relationships between individual characteristics (gender, ideology, and attitudes about gender equity) and humor appreciation and comprehension. To test H3, interaction terms were calculated with each of the three proposed individual characteristics (gender, ideology, and attitudes about gender equity) and the dummy-coded variables for experimental condition (ironic and hyperbolic). These were added to the appreciation and comprehension models described above. In models predicting humor appreciation, none of the

interactions was statistically significant (ideology X ironic dummy variable: $p = .84$; gender X ironic dummy variable: $p = .26$; attitudes toward gender equity: $p = .54$), indicating that experimental condition did not affect the strength or direction of the relationships between any of these three characteristics and humor appreciation.

Next, we added these same interaction terms to the models predicting overall segment comprehension and specific joke comprehension (H3b). At its core, H3b is about the likely selective perception of the meaning of ironic humor compared to hyperbolic humor. Due to its ambiguous nature, irony is expected to be more open to interpretation by the audience than is hyperbole. Due to the feminist nature of the experimental stimuli, the ironic feminist humor is expected to be best understood by liberals, women, and those high in gender equity beliefs (among whom pre-existing beliefs support the argument made in the humor) and least understood by conservatives, men, and those low in gender equity beliefs (among whom pre-existing beliefs contradict the actual argument made in the humor). When predicting comprehension of the full segment, the interaction of ideology and ironic condition was not significant ($p = .483$). The same was true when predicting accuracy of comprehension of the individual joke ($p = .125$), indicating that liberals and conservatives did not selectively perceive the meaning of the humor as a function of condition. Similarly, when predicting both measures of humor comprehension, the interaction of gender and humor type was not significant (overall humor comprehension: $p =.563$; joke comprehension: $p = .885$), indicating that men and women were no more likely to selectively perceive the meaning of the humor as a function of humor type. Finally, when predicting humor comprehension with the interaction of humor type and attitudes about gender equity, we see some indication of a difference as a function of humor structure. First, when predicting comprehension of the overall segments, the interaction of beliefs about gender equity and ironic condition was marginally significant ($p = .089$). When predicting comprehension of the specific joke, the interaction of attitudes about gender equity and ironic condition was not significant ($p = .158$).

To better understand the meaning of the marginally significant interaction of attitude toward gender equity and the ironic condition predicting segment comprehension accuracy, we calculated predicted values of *Y* (comprehension accuracy) at various levels of gender equity beliefs, among those in the ironic, hyperbolic, and control conditions. These predicted values were based on the coefficients from the regression analysis that explored segment comprehension accuracy with gender equity beliefs, condition, and the interaction of those two while controlling for gender, ideology, party, age, and race. When calculating predicted values of comprehension accuracy, all variables were placed at their mean and sample values of gender equity beliefs, and experimental conditions were plugged in to the model to generate the graphic depiction shown in Figure 3.1.

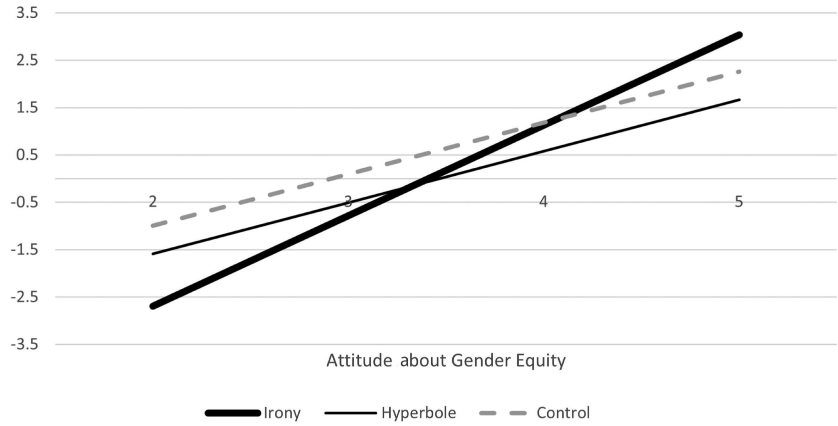

Figure 3.1 Predicting segment comprehension accuracy by attitudes about gender equity (AAGE) and humor condition.

According to Figure 3.1 and consistent with H3, in the ironic condition, those highest in gender equity attitudes showed the highest comprehension accuracy, and those lowest in gender equity attitudes showed the lowest comprehension accuracy. These results show some (albeit limited) evidence of a model in which irony facilitates comprehension among those who share a belief system and knowledge base consistent with the point of view of the comic. But those lacking that belief system and knowledge base are at a disadvantage in the face of irony and, in fact, may be inclined to take away the *opposite* meaning from the humorous stimuli. This is evidenced by the strong negative predicted values of comprehension accuracy among those low in gender equity beliefs in the ironic condition. These negative values indicate that these participants thought the *inaccurate* reading of the segment was *more* accurate than the actual (accurate) meaning of the segment. So, in the context of the ironic clip criticizing Kellyanne Conway, those with weaker gender equity attitudes believed that Samantha Bee was "criticizing Fox News for forcing feminist principles upon her audience" *more* than she was "commenting on how Fox News generally criticizes liberals for their use of 'identity politics,' such as feminism." This finding, albeit not particularly robust, operates in a manner consistent with the proposition of selective perception in the face of ironic humor. Hyperbole and the control clip were similarly comprehended, consistent with the hypothesis. Here, the explicit, exaggerated nature of hyperbole did not lend itself to being selectively perceived in the same way that irony did.

For another illustration of this relationship between attitudes toward gender equity and feminist humor comprehension as a function of humor type, mean segment comprehension accuracy scores were calculated as a function of low and high attitudes toward gender equity (split at their mean), within each experimental condition. Results are shown in Figures 3.2.

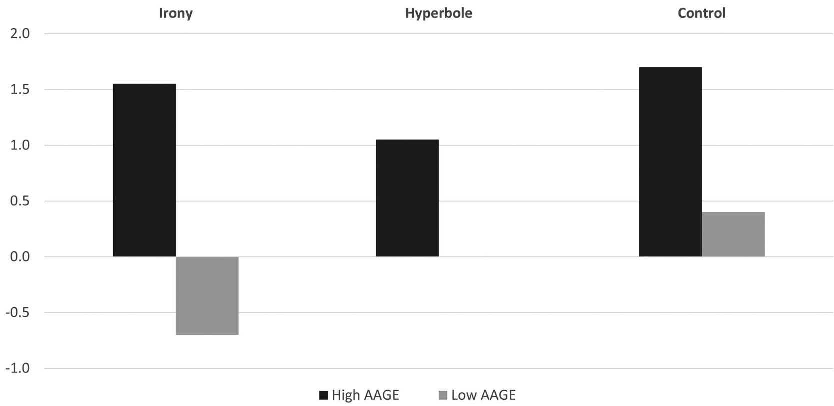

Figure 3.2 Mean segment comprehension accuracy as a function of attitudes about gender equity (AAGE) and experimental condition.

Discussion

This study of the processes of feminist political satire were grounded in three hypotheses based on message- and individual-level characteristics.

H1 predicted that feminist humor (the hyperbolic and ironic conditions) would be appreciated more by liberals, women, and people with more feminist-leading attitudes about gender equity. While liberals and people who had stronger attitudes about gender equity found feminist humor to be funnier, women did not – but men did. Often feminist humor can make men the "other," which might alienate them. It is possible that the feminist humor stimuli used in this experiment were unique, as they criticized women for not being feminist enough, as opposed to the typical "othering" of men that is often at the heart of feminist arguments. This may have accounted for men appreciating it differentially as their group was not the target of the joke. Further research should examine whether men maintain their appreciation for feminist humor if their group is the actual target of the humor. This would imply that it may not be the feminist argument within the joke that determines appreciation but whether a person feels targeted by the joke itself, which would operate in keeping with disposition theory.

H2 predicted that feminist humor would be more accurately comprehended by liberals, women, and those with higher gender equity attitudes. While there was no evidence that ideology or gender predicted comprehension of feminist humor, attitudes about gender equity did. Those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity were more likely to accurately comprehend the feminist political satire. This finding implies that it is necessary to have some knowledge base available to help understand the complexities of feminist humor. Those without such a base may have been more prone to misinterpreting the humor in keeping with their own belief systems.

H3 predicted that comprehension and appreciation would be moderated by humor type. While the data showed no evidence that appreciation was significantly modified by humor type, there is at least a modest suggestion that comprehension was. Attitudes about gender equity guided how participants comprehended humor – differently as a function of humor structure. While those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity comprehended feminist humor more accurately than those with lower gender equity scores (across both humor structures), the extent of these differences varied depending on whether the humor was presented ironically or hyperbolically.

As illustrated in Figure 3.2, the ironic condition produced the greatest discrepancy in humor comprehension: Participants with the lowest attitude toward gender equity actually rated the "inaccurate" interpretation of the ironic video as *more accurate* than the "accurate" interpretation. In other words, these low gender equity participants rated the wrong interpretation, "Despite her controversy, Kellyanne Conway advocates for women's rights in her own way and should be commended for it," as *more accurate* than the right one, "Although Kellyanne Conway may be presented as an advocate for women's rights, her politics are actually harmful to women." The same pattern was true when looking at how respondents with varying gender equity beliefs interpreted the specific ironic jokes from within the videos.

In the hyperbolic condition, those with higher gender equity scores were still more accurate in their interpretation of the stimuli than their low gender equity counterparts, but the discrepancy in comprehension accuracy was significantly less pronounced than in the ironic condition. It was in the ironic condition where we see participants understanding the humor in keeping with their belief systems related to feminism and attitudes about gender equity. This finding implies that feminist humor is more likely to be selectively interpreted depending upon the audience's attitudes about gender equity as well as the complexity and ambiguity of the humorous stimulus. Having higher attitudes toward gender equity likely provided the context and knowledge base required for a person to appropriately interpret feminist humor made using the complex and ambiguous structure of irony.

While this study provides a first step to help us understand how attitudes about gender equity might shape selective comprehension and appreciation of feminist humor (especially ironic humor), several key limitations prevent us from going too far in our generalizations from these results. First, the study is based on three unique clips from one satire program, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*. Limiting our stimuli to one video per condition introduces a case-category confound. It might be the case that some unique aspect of each of these clips, other than the feminist humor or

humor structure, is responsible for the differences witnessed here. Scholars should consider testing numerous stimuli representing each content category to better understand the strength of these relationships and the mechanism through which the selectivity processes operate. In addition, creating custom stimuli would allow researchers to have tight control over the content of the clips and to better contrast humor structures like irony and hyperbole.

As noted earlier, both feminist clips criticized two leading Republican women leaders, which likely affected the results. Instead of focusing on a feminist issue, it focused on partisan leaders, which may have been the reason that ideology was such a large predictor. Moreover, the clips criticized two women for their failure to be good feminists. This may explain why the humor was more appreciated by men than women, a finding that contradicted the hypothesis. Future research should utilize feminist humor that focuses on a specifically feminist issue as opposed to deconstructing both partisan and female leaders.

There were also limitations stemming from the use of *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* as a stimulus. Bee is a relatively well-known feminist figure; the fact that she is the one delivering the humor may have affected participants' rating of the humor or their overall comprehension. In addition, she is a woman delivering a feminist message, which may have affected how participants understood the humor and how funny they found it, as people generally tend to find women less humorous than men (Hooper et al., 2016). Future research may feature how appreciated a joke is when it is delivered by a woman in comparison to the same message delivered by a man.

As always with survey research, social desirability can be a consideration. In particular, in answering questions about gender equity, participants may have wanted to have more socially acceptable answers about their beliefs of gender norms. Results may have been affected by the fact that participants watched the clip before they were asked about their attitudes about gender equity. Future research would benefit from collecting information about such attitudes separately or by adding more clips. It would also be useful to take a more longitudinal approach to determine how beliefs at one time shape perceptions of content viewed at a later time.

This research sought to understand the relationship between humor structure (ironic versus hyperbolic), characteristics that relate to feminist beliefs (ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity), and the appreciation and comprehension of feminist political satire. Our results imply that in order to understand feminist humor as intended by the message sender, audiences will need to already hold beliefs sympathetic to feminist arguments. Regardless of gender and other sociodemographic variables, attitudes about gender equity were the strongest driver of comprehension

of feminist humor. This does not necessarily imply that feminist concepts are themselves complex but that, in the absence of the requisite belief system, ambiguous humor that addresses feminist issues is unlikely to be understood. In a media environment in which users incidentally encounter messages that run counter to their own views (through social media, especially), it is crucial that creatives and humorists understand the many ways in which their content is being interpreted by audiences, often in ways that undermine the larger points they are looking to make.

To conclude, ironies, hyperboles, and other related concepts and rhetorical devices (e.g., sarcasm) used to convey information involve deliberately crafted messages and cognitively complex processes. Particularly for irony to be effective – at persuading others, contributing to a better understanding of an issue, or connecting with (like-minded) others via humor – it requires not only proficiency in the language being used but also a certain sociocultural background. As feminist content, whether humorous or not, is increasingly featured, the potential for non-feminist individuals misunderstanding this content increases. Similarly, as non-news formats are increasingly deployed to raise awareness about certain issues, explain complex scientific or political matters accessibly, and thus reach new audiences, scholars need to examine other issue contexts, micro- and macro-level conditions, and groups in society. Besides the obvious individual-level cognitive and affective gratifications of humor in political messaging, a larger normative question might focus on humor as a way to facilitate political conversations and connect individuals and groups that otherwise do not engage with one another.

Note

1 The students were trained on identifying exaggerated versus ironic humor during a class lesson and given an additional codebook. The codebook defined satire on a general level and identified examples of ironic humor and exaggerated humor. For each condition's stimulus video, students were asked to identify using a Likert scale how closely they thought the video used ironic humor and exaggerated humor. They were then asked to identify, again using a Likert scale, how funny, interesting, boring, confusing, understandable, offensive, enjoyable, and challenging they found the video. Participants were then asked to explain what they thought the main message of the clip was in an open-ended format. Finally, students were provided the literal and inverted meanings of each of the clips and asked to rate on a Likert scale how accurately they thought it portrayed the meaning of the clip. Results showed that the trained respondents rated the ironic clip to be more ironic (M = 6.41, SD = .62) than exaggerated (M = 4.12, SD = 1.78). They also rated the exaggerated clip to be more exaggerated (M = 4.31, SD = 1.92) than ironic (M = 3.12, SD = 1.26). There was also no significant difference between the two clips in terms of how funny, interesting, boring, confusing, understandable, offensive, enjoyable, or

challenging respondents rated them. When comparing the control clip to the ironic and exaggerated clips, there was also no significant difference in how participants rated the clip along any of these factors. Students were asked to provide open-ended answers to what they thought to be the real meaning of the clip. All the open-ended answers provided across conditions were aligned with the correct interpretation for the clip (i.e., the literal meaning of the exaggerated clip and the inverted meaning of the ironic clip). When provided with both literal and inverted options for the clips across the conditions, results were similar. The accurate interpretation (M = 4.33, SD = .97) was perceived more often than the negative interpretation (M = 1.68, SD = .95).

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APPENDIX A

Randomization Check

Table 3.A1 Randomization check: Means comparison of main variables across conditions with one-way ANOVA

	Ideology			*Gender*			*Attitudes about gender equity*		
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*P*	*M*	*SD*	*P*	*M*	*SD*	*P*
Ironic	4.20	1.83	.16	.48	0.50	.36	3.50	0.50	.31
Hyperbolic	3.79	1.59	.16	.61	0.49	.36	3.49	0.52	.31
Control	4.36	1.67	.16	.63	0.85	.36	3.38	0.54	.31

APPENDIX B
Experimental Stimuli

Ironic Stimulus

The ironic clip that was used as a stimulus in this experiment was a clip from the January 18, 2017, episode, titled "The Great Feminists in Feminism Herstory Hall of Lady Fame." In the clip Bee uses irony to convey her dissatisfaction with Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to President Trump. She begins, "And tonight we want to celebrate a truly special female woman: Donald Trump's omnipresent spokescobra, Kellyanne Conway." They then show clips of Fox News recognizing Ms. Conway as the "first woman to run a successful presidential campaign." Bee responds to these clips by saying, "Jesus Fox, stop shoving your feminist identity politics down America's throats." This joke is carefully constructed. Bee is criticizing Fox in an ironic way. Contextually, one has to have the knowledge that Fox News is a known critic of feminist principles. Bee does not mean to criticize Fox for uplifting a woman but instead intends to show the hypocrisy in their stance by accusing them of the same "identity politics" crime of which Fox often accuses mainstream media outlets. The joke is even more complex as it not only displays a politically liberal message by highlighting hypocrisy within a conservative news organization but also advocates for feminism. As with irony, there is a cognitive switch in interpretation and valence that must occur in order for the joke to be successful. If the switch in meaning were successful here, the joke would also convey a feminist concept: The idea that the common criticism that by empowering women, you're shoving "identity politics" in places where they shouldn't be is a ludicrous criticism of feminism. Potentially if a viewer were to misinterpret the use of irony in this segment, they might find that Bee is agreeing with the notion that Fox News is "shoving" feminist politics down viewers' throats. If one lacks the context that Fox News is typically somewhat critical of feminist principles and if they also lack the knowledge that Bee herself identifies as a feminist, they may think her joke is actually misandrist. Without these contexts, one might gain the impression that Fox News is the feminist organization here and Samantha Bee is a conservative critic.

Hyperbolic Stimulus

The hyperbolic stimulus for this experiment also features an induction to the "Feminism Herstory Hall of Fame," this time in the case of Ivanka Trump. There are multiple instances throughout the clip where Bee utilizes hyperbolic humor and exaggeration to deconstruct Ivanka as a feminist and discuss her role in the White House. At the start of the segment, Bee criticizes how some people consider Ivanka to be an advocate for the environment. Following a clip about how Ivanka met with Leonardo DiCaprio or advocates for environment, Bee says:

> Meeting with Leonardo DiCaprio is not a sign that you care about climate change. It's a sign that you were a teenager in the 90s ... She's not going to convince her dad climate change isn't a Chinese hoax. Anyone with a dad knows they have invincible old man opinion strength. I can't change my dad's mind about chemtrails for longer than 8 hours.

Bee here is straightforward in her criticism; her humor structure is simple in that she's explicitly saying that what Ivanka Trump does is not noteworthy and doesn't deserve commendation. This is in contrast to the aforementioned Kellyanne Conway clip in which Bee ironically pretends to laud Conway for her "feminism."

Bee continues her criticism of Ivanka Trump by attacking her feminism or lack thereof. After a clip about how people are writing to Ivanka and how people feel as though she's advocating for liberal ideals in the White House:

> Stop it, democrats. She's not a wailing wall for you to desperately stuff your prayer notes into. Look, I get it? People are comforted by the thought of a progressive feminist in the White House. To which I say – if you wanted that, you should have voted for it. The failing *New York Times* even published an article fantasizing that Ivanka might save federal arts funding because she took ballet lessons when she was 8. Which is like hoping she'll save blue collar jobs because of her brief stint as a jackhammer operator. Hey working class men, immigrants aren't taking your jobs, rich white ladies are.

Again, the humor here is straightforward. Bee is aggrandizing the image of Ivanka and feminism and pointing out fallacies in her construction as a feminist by using exaggeration, such as the aforementioned jackhammer operator joke; it's obvious that Bee is intending to be critical of Ivanka Trump here – the humor is so grandiose that it is unlike to be misinterpreted.

4 Campaigning on "Political Correctness"

Revisiting the 2016 Election of Donald Trump

Frank J. Gonzalez, David C. Wilson, and Darren W. Davis

During a 2016 GOP presidential primary debate, Donald Trump responded to a question about his references to women as "fat pigs" and "disgusting animals" by saying, "I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct. I've been challenged by so many people, and I don't frankly have time for total political correctness. And to be honest with you, this country doesn't have time, either" (Caesar, 2017).

Trump's invocation of political correctness (PC) in this debate was not uncommon, and the role that PC plays in American politics continues to grow. The use of the term has varied greatly since its early uses, and below we elaborate on potential deeper understandings of what PC is and how it is leveraged. However, the term today is broadly thought of as representing kowtowing to top-down pressures that enforce hypersensitive norms (Chow, 2016), or more succinctly, deferring any potentially offensive commentary.

Ultimately, Trump's stance against PC would become a hallmark of his campaign and his populist identity (e.g., Lakoff, 2017; Stiehm, 2017). Yet no party or candidate "owns" concerns over there being "too much PC" (which we refer to as "PC concern"). Various examples of anti-PC rhetoric can be found on the political left as well, as reflected by liberal comedian Bill Maher continually lamenting the ills of too much PC. In another instance, referring to the "white-washed" nature of awards shows, Tyler, the Creator, said the new "urban" category of the Grammy Awards is essentially a "politically correct version of the n-word" (Owoseje, 2020). In fact, a substantial majority of Americans across the political spectrum claim to believe there is too much PC in society (Hawkins et al., 2018). Despite these data, PC culture certainly appears to be more threatening to conservatives, who seem to have monopolized PC concern for political gain.

The conservative use of PC concern has been on full display since Trump's 2016 presidential election. For example, when Senator John McCain died shortly before the 2018 midterm elections, then Senate candidate Kelli

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Ward of Arizona speculated that McCain's battle with cancer was timed to interfere with her campaign. In the face of public backlash to her statement, she tweeted that "political correctness is a cancer!" (Sanchez, 2018). In response to a murder in which the assailant was an undocumented immigrant, Representative Steve King of Iowa posted on social media that "leftists sacrificed thousands, including their own, on the altar of political correctness" (Opsahl & Rodriguez, 2018). The term has also caught on outside of the United States, with former United Kingdom Independence Party leader, Nigel Farage, saying, "I think the people see us as actually standing up and saying what we think, not being constrained or scared by political correctness" (Szilágyi, 2017).

Is PC concern as politically consequential for the public as it seems? If so, what allowed Trump and conservatives to harness it for electoral gain? We examine the consequences of PC as a political issue in the 2016 presidential election, as well as whether the public perceived it to be implied by Trump's "Make America Great Again" ("MAGA") slogan. We also test if PC concern and its transmission through the MAGA slogan manifested differently across targets of PC as well as individuals' race, partisanship, ideology, and support for Trump. Through this examination, we develop a theoretical framework for understanding how PC concerns have been so successfully marketed to voters – particularly, those who are White or conservative.

Our basic argument is twofold. First, we suggest PC concerns strategically aligned with Trump's populist identity as he ran on halting, if not reversing, the country's sociocultural trajectory, which was perceived as peeling away from the status quo and stifling voices that might object to this trajectory. The status quo, for all intents and purposes, is the traditional social hierarchy in which members of dominant, majority groups (e.g., White, male) hold disproportionately more power – economically, politically, and perhaps most importantly, socially – than members of non-dominant minority groups. Trump used anti-PC rhetoric to position himself as someone who could return *voice* to those who perceived themselves as powerless against the tidal forces of egalitarianism and progressivism. Consequently, PC concern was a substantial and unique predictor of support for Trump above and beyond other policy attitudes and political identities.

Second, we argue that in general, PC concern taps specifically into Whites' and conservatives' motivations to preserve the status quo (Jost et al., 2004). PC is seen as a tool used by elites to constrain individuals' voice. However, Trump's and other conservatives' PC concern was not about just anyone's voice; it was about protecting the voice of those who had been dominant under the status quo but who perceived their dominance to be threatened by society's progressive trajectory. Thus, PC concern speaks to

how the country might be changing in ways that threaten values related to subjective justice and deservingness. In line with these propositions, we expect individuals who tend to favor preserving the status quo –Whites and conservatives – to be more concerned about PC than those who favor progress and change – racial minorities and liberals. Moreover, MAGA should be interpreted as an implicit appeal to concerns over PC.

Political Correctness as Restrictive Communication

PC has always referred, in some basic sense, to the avoidance of language that offends certain groups, but the groups thought to be "protected" by PC have shifted over time. Being "politically correct" underwent a shift in meaning sometime during the 1960s (Perry, 1992). Originally, Black Power advocates and progressives used the term to refer to those who deviated from the prevailing tenets of their cause (i.e., not telling the truth and hiding from facing facts). However, conservative pundits appropriated the term, using it as part of a rallying cry for traditional values and opposition to affirmative efforts to empower disadvantaged racial-ethnic groups (Chow, 2016). Being "politically correct" then became a reference to what was seen as a dogmatic, elitist, top-down attack on ostensibly status quo traditional values. Instead of civility, PC started to represent an Orwellian threat of censorship of free expression and, to some, a mandated distortion of reality implemented for the sake of shielding individuals from painful truths (Hughes, 2010).

Research has corroborated the idea that PC concern reflects perceived restrictions of free expression and that such perceptions can actually bolster greater support for offensive or "anti-PC" expressions (Conway & Schaller, 2005). Specifically, when norms are perceived as being implemented forcibly or through some top-down authority, individuals tend to reject the norms and even shift their attitudes and expressions in the opposite direction (Conway & Schaller, 2005; Conway et al., 2009). Two mechanisms can explain this rejection of norms and subsequent attitude shifts. The first is "emotional reactance," whereby individuals react because they perceive the norm to infringe on their values tied to freedom of choice and speech. The second involves "informational contamination," whereby norm rejection is based on individuals perceiving its informational value (and the consensus that produced it) to be tainted by the perception that the norm was created out of coercion and dogmatism (Conway & Schaller, 2005; Conway et al., 2009; see also Morris, 2001).

According to this line of thinking, there is nothing inherently partisan or ideological about PC. If anti-PC rhetoric and resistance to PC are driven by perceptions of PC as a form of restrictive communication, PC norms should offend the democratic sensibilities of individuals on both

the political right and the political left. After all, being anti-PC seems to be widespread, with approximately 80% of Americans across the political spectrum (including 30% of the most progressive members of the public) believing PC is a problem (Hawkins et al., 2018). Progressive voices have on numerous occasions called out events, people, or organizations for being too PC in their approach to confronting things like racism, sexism, and bigotry. However, anti-PC rhetoric seems to be particularly popular among conservatives, Republicans, and especially, Donald Trump. Indeed, Conway et al. (2017) show that chronic reactance to restrictive communication norms strongly predicted support for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election and that priming PC norms increased support for Trump but not Hillary Clinton. Why might the power of PC concern be greater for the political right, and Trump in particular?

Political Correctness, Minority Empowerment, and the Status Quo

The presence of PC may be perceived by some as representing the threat of minorities claiming more power in society rather than just a barrier to free expression. Perceived increases in diversity in America may give rise to concerns that the majority group's status and position in society are decreasing (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Some research corroborates this notion of "racial threat" as a key component of concerns about PC, with studies showing an association between threatening perceptions of PC and prejudice (Lalonde et al., 2000; Sampson, 1993). These findings suggest that public opposition to PC may reflect beliefs that racial-ethnic minority groups are gaining power at the expense of Whites and that government is acquiescing to progressive racial pressures and dismissing Whites' concerns as racist and illegitimate. In support of this reasoning, the concept of racial threat has been shown to powerfully influence social and political attitudes about a host of issues and political figures (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Outten et al., 2012; Wilkins et al., 2017). We therefore argue that to most non-Hispanic Whites, the presence of PC represents increasing out-group power—in the form of restricting dominant group voices—and thus is a threat to the majority's current level of privilege in society.

Our theory has grounding in system justification theory (SJT), which proposes that people are motivated to hold positive views about existing social, economic, and political arrangements as a rationalization for their current state (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004). SJT incorporates a "just-world" belief orientation that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get (Lerner, 1980). Thus, dominant groups would perceive restricting speech that "offends minorities" inconsistent with the

norm that it is okay to "tell it like it is." Adopting a legitimizing belief that there is too much constraint on free speech could also serve to address feelings of threat to one's power in society (Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999; Crocker et al., 1999; van Prooijen & Acker, 2015), particularly among Whites and conservatives who may have feared social sanctions due to their criticisms about President Barack Obama because of his race. In 2016, the candidate willing to defend the status quo was Donald Trump.

Against this backdrop, our first set of hypotheses revolves around the perceptions and effects of PC and PC concern. Namely, we expect PC is perceived to restrict communication in a way that violates traditional values and undermines existing social structures. PC concern should thus manifest in a way that is not aimed at one particular group, and it should be highest among those likely to support the status quo generally. Further, PC concern should be a major factor in predicting support for Trump in the 2016 election.

> ***H1:*** *PC concern reflects concerns about minority groups broadly rather than concerns about any one particular group.*
>
> ***H2:*** *Whites, conservatives, Republicans, and Trump supporters are higher in PC concern than racial minorities, liberals, Democrats, and non-Trump supporters.*
>
> ***H3:*** *PC concern predicted support for Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election above and beyond a range of other variables that predict support for Trump.*

The MAGA Slogan as an Implicit Appeal

Pundits have claimed that MAGA refers to various aspects of the Trump agenda, including restoring the United States' status as an economic powerhouse, reestablishing U.S. global military dominance, and returning political power to the public (i.e., "draining the swamp"). However, the literature on implicit racial appeals – messages that covertly (rather than overtly) express racial or anti-Black sentiment – offers an extended understanding of the potential consequence and meaning of the MAGA slogan. Implicit racial appeals are extremely powerful because the omission of explicit racial language protects the communication from charges of racism (Lopez, 2014; Mendelberg, 2001; Valentino et al., 2002). Recent work has shown that the Trump campaign leveraged appeals to the "White working class" (Lamont et al., 2017) and that appeals to White identity (see Jardina, 2019) and, specifically, the threat of changing racial demographics, increased support for Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential race (Major et al., 2016). Further, priming racial diversity threat increased opposition to PC (Major et al., 2016). This finding suggests Trump may

have been viewed as the populist messenger that would "Make America Great Again" – in particular, by listening to anti-PC concerns about race and privileging those concerns through policy.

The MAGA slogan is not explicitly racial nor explicitly about PC, but we argue it is an implicit anti-PC appeal that is racial (although not exclusively racial) for several reasons. First, as instruments of popular persuasion, slogans reflect the sentiments and personas of politicians who wield them. For example, if President Donald Trump sympathized with White nationalists and supremacists while denigrating African Americans and other racial minorities, his use of racially derogatory expressions to demean African Americans, Latinos, and Muslims during his presidential campaign may have led to perceptions of the slogan as an expression of racial-ethnic antagonism (Phillips, 2017). Second, while political slogans are defined by politicians and their strategic marketing campaigns, the individuals and groups listening contribute to the meaning as well. Candidates may lose control over the meaning of their slogans as other politicians and groups adopt and coopt them for their own purposes. By extension, the MAGA slogan appeared to reflect the rhetoric of the Alternative Right (alt-right), predicated on White supremacy and nationalism, racial resentment, opposition to immigration, and backlash against President Barack Obama.

In general, slogans like MAGA are expressions embedded in larger campaign appeals (Sherif, 1937). To the extent that slogans can shape attitudes or mobilize individuals, associative networks serve as a useful framework for understanding how slogans work might work in the messaging process (e.g., Fazio et al., 1982). Evaluations toward an object are represented by associations in memory, such as when a slogan makes one concept salient, additional concepts that can influence one's evaluation are activated automatically (e.g., Fazio et al., 1986; Greenwald et al., 1998). Even short slogans are capable of activating a broad semantic network of information, values, and feelings in consumers (Boush, 1993).

We posit that Trump's MAGA slogan provided a symbolic communicative shortcut that allowed for a populist anti-PC message while allowing enough ambiguity for individuals to imbue an anti-minority empowerment or pro-status quo meaning on it. Because of their intentionally ambiguous language, slogans serve as an efficient representation of political candidates and convey a meaning that "speaks to" particular groups (Denton, 1980). Thus, although we expect a core group of individuals (Whites and conservatives) to be the most affected by the MAGA slogan (and thus mobilized to vote for Trump), the MAGA slogan was interpreted similarly across subgroups as an implicit anti-PC message aimed at tapping motivations to preserve the status quo. In other words, many people can hear the "dog whistle," but not everyone is drawn to it. Importantly, individuals may be reluctant to acknowledge the MAGA slogan's sheer anti-minority, anti-PC

elements relative to more substantive issues Trump campaigned on, such as regulation of business or military strength. As such, to avoid social desirability bias in responses, we test our expectations regarding the MAGA slogan.

> ***H4a:*** *The MAGA slogan was significantly interpreted as an appeal to PC concern.*
>
> ***H4b:*** *The MAGA slogan was significantly interpreted as an appeal to PC concern related to racial minorities and African Americans, specifically.*
>
> ***H5:*** *The MAGA slogan was interpreted similarly across race, partisanship, ideology, and candidate support.*

Data

This research uses data from the University of Delaware, Delaware Politics Survey, a random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone survey of a representative sample of 900 (landline, $n = 450$; cell phone, $n = 450$) registered voters, living in the state of Delaware. The data were collected by Princeton Data Source from September 19 to September 28, 2016, and the study was managed by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). The respondents were provided by Survey Sampling International (SSI). The dual frame design yielded 8% (AAPOR RR3)[1] response rates for each of the landline and cellular samples. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is ±3.8%. The unweighted sample contained 658 non-Hispanic Whites, 148 non-Hispanic African Americans, 44 Hispanics, 31 respondents of other racial ethnic backgrounds, and 19 respondents who refused to indicate their race.[2] Due to the skewed distribution of political opinion regarding both Trump and several of our variables within racial-ethnic groups, it is not possible to compute accurate estimates for each of the racial-ethnic minority groups for our variables like candidate preference. Therefore, we combined the non-White respondents into a single category of (racial-ethnic) "minorities." This allows us to include a larger sample of respondents and gives attention to the attitudes and opinions of non-Whites. Our final working sample contains 881 respondents who self-reported a racial-ethnic background.

PC Concern and Who It Targets

Our analysis begins with two related empirical questions. First, how much of a public concern is PC? Second, is the level of PC concern targeted toward certain groups, particularly those groups based on race, gender, religion, or immigration status? We used a split-sample experiment randomizing

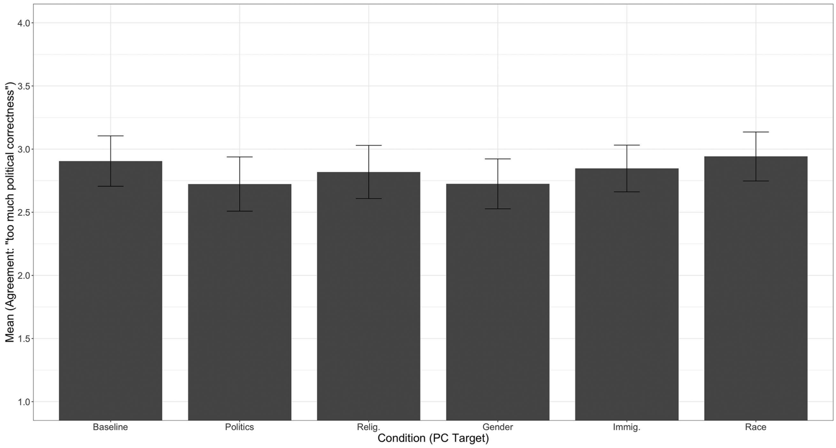

Figure 4.1 Political correctness experiment (N = 865).

one of six treatments in the context of a question about PC being one of the biggest problems in America. The *Baseline* condition asked, "Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree that one of the biggest problems in this country is being too politically correct?" The other conditions added a clause to the end of the *Baseline* condition: "*when talking about* [*Politics*] | [*Race*] | [*Gender*] | [*Immigration*] | [*Religion*]]?" The first treatment focuses explicitly on politics, and the last four treatments focus on specific groups. Each respondent received only one version of the question, and responses were coded such that higher values indicate greater PC concern.[3]

Addressing our first question about how much concern exists in the public, the results show that strong majorities are concerned about PC. Aggregating the "agree" and "strongly agree" responses (not shown in tables or figures), 69% were concerned in the baseline condition, 58% in the "politics" condition, 71% in the "race" condition, 58% in the "gender" condition, 65% in the "immigration" condition, and 69% in the "religion" conditions. These high levels of concern likely reflect frustration over the inability to make negative comments not only about the specific groups mentioned but any subject matter in general.

With respect to our second question about the group-centric nature of PC concerns, the experimental treatments did not affect the mean levels of concern about PC (F[5,859] = 0.95, *n.s.* = .45) or the categorical response distributions (χ^2 (15, N = 865) = 18.00, *n.s.* = .26). Figure 4.1 shows that PC concern in each condition – Baseline (M = 2.91, SD = 1.12), Politics (M = 2.72, SD = 1.18), Religion (M = 2.82, SD = 1.09), Gender (M = 2.72, SD = 1.11), Immigration (M = 2.85, SD = 1.09), and Race (M = 2.94,

SD = 1.05) – is nearly uniform across conditions. Thus, in line with *H1*, the central basis of PC is about restrictive speech broadly – if people are concerned about PC regarding one group, they are concerned about PC in general.

We also examined differences in PC concerns across racial-ethnic groups, partisanship, ideology, and vote choice. First, we checked the effects of the experimental treatment across these subgroups by interacting condition with race, partisanship, ideology, and 2016 candidate preference. As shown in Figure 4.2, and based on 95% confidence levels, the treatment effects were null across the race ($F[5,837] = 1.84$, n.s.), partisanship ($F[10, 832] = 1.63$, $p = .09$), ideology ($F[5, 837] = 1.12$, n.s.), and vote choice ($F[10, 778] = 1.47$, n.s.) subgroups. These results indicate that the (null) experimental effects are constant across subgroups.

Since overall PC concern did not vary across the experimental treatments, we combined the experimental responses to form a single item about PC concerns to see if opinions varied across subgroups. We found consistent differences across subgroups, supporting *H2*. PC concerns were higher among Whites (mean difference = 0.30, $t = 3.32$, $p < .001$), conservatives ($r = 0.371$, $p < .001$), Republicans ($F[2,847] = 91.28$, $p < .001$), and Trump supporters ($F[2,793] = 111.20$, $p < .001$) than racial minorities, liberals, Democrats, and Clinton supporters, respectively. Pairwise comparisons using Tukey's Honest Significant Difference (HSD) adjustments confirmed that for partisanship, Republicans ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.90$) and Democrats ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.08$) differed significantly from one another.

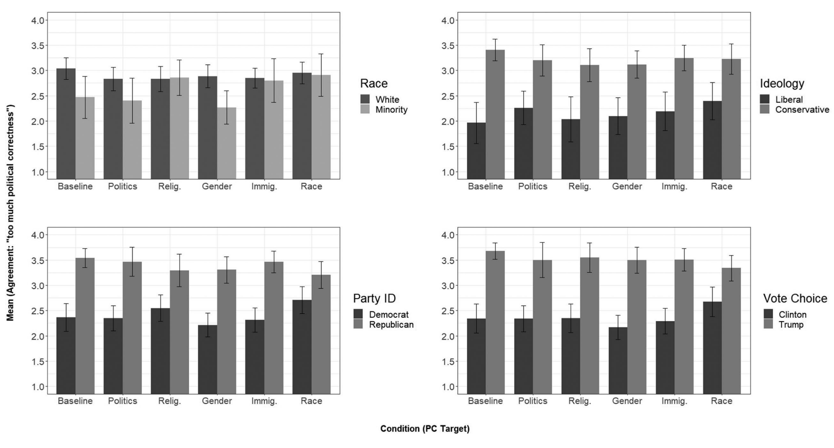

Figure 4.2 Subgroup differences: Political correctness experiment.

Note: Sample sizes for the four tables: Whites $N = 658$, Minorities $N = 223$; Liberal $N = 236$, Conservative $N = 345$; Democrat $N = 485$, Republican $N = 485$; and Clinton $N = 427$, Trump $N = 269$. Ideology split into categories for illustration purposes only.

For vote choice, Trump voters ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.78$) differed significantly from Clinton voters ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.07$).

PC Concern and Candidate Support

To test *H3,* we ran separate binomial logistic regressions predicting candidate preference (dummy-coded into three variables: support for Trump relative to Clinton, support for Trump relative to some other candidate, and support for some other candidate relative to Clinton). Independent variables included PC concern as well as race (minority = 1), age, education, household income, gender (female = 1), type of community (urban, suburban, rural [reference category]), ideology, and dummy variables for Democratic and independent partisanship (Republicans as the reference category).[4] In six additional sets of regressions, PC concern was replaced with each of six political issues asked about in our survey. Four were dichotomous support or approval items about: the legalization of marijuana ("0" = support [$n = 488$], "1" = oppose [$n = 372$]); the death penalty for murder ("0" = favor [$n = 488$], "1" = oppose [$n = 361$]); raising the federal minimum wage ("0" = favor [$n = 511$], "1" = oppose [$n = 373$]); and the Obama health care law passed in 2010 (the Affordable Care Act; "0" = approve [$n = 453$], "1" = disapprove [$n = 417$]). The two remaining items, both utilizing four-point scales, asked respondents how much they agree with photo IDs being required for voting ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.09$) and felons being banned from voting ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.21$). The question wording for each variable is provided in the appendix.

As shown in Table 4.1, PC concern significantly increased support for Trump over Clinton as well as support for Trump over other candidates. In the Trump–Clinton comparison, each unit increase in PC concern is associated with a twofold increase in the odds of choosing Trump over Clinton. Looking at comparisons of support for Trump versus some candidate other than Clinton, PC concern was similarly predictive of candidate preference. The odds of supporting some other candidate besides Trump over Clinton, though, do not vary significantly across levels of PC concern. We can see that various policy attitudes also predict candidate preference – most notably, approval of the Affordable Care Act. To explore the robustness of the effects of PC concern and determine whether its effects reflect some *unique* variation in candidate preferences, we ran binomial logistic regressions predicting each of the candidate-preference dummy variables with all the variables mentioned above as well as each of the policy attitudes in Table 4.1. Across all dependent variables except the probability of choosing "Other" over "Clinton," PC concern maintains a significant independent effect in the expected direction (see Table 4.A1 in the appendix for full model results). In all, PC concern turns out to

Table 4.1 Regressing candidate preference on PC concern/policy attitudes – 2016 Delaware Politics Survey

	Prefer Trump (vs. Clinton)			*Prefer Trump (vs. Other)*			*Prefer Other (vs. Clinton)*		
	B	(S.E.)	O.R.	B	(S.E.)	O.R.	B	(S.E.)	O.R.
PC concern	.69	(.20)***	2.00	.66	(.18)***	1.93	.19	(.14)	1.21
Disapprove Obama health care	2.37	(.43)***	10.73	–.40	(.47)	.67	2.05	(.33)***	7.75
Oppose federal min. wage increase	.51	(.39)	1.67	–1.09	(.43)*	.34	.76	(.32)*	2.15
Oppose legalize marijuana	1.15	(.42)**	3.15	1.10	(.36)**	3.01	.04	(.35)	1.04
Support death penalty for murder	.57	(.40)	1.77	.93	(.35)**	2.53	–.09	(.31)	.91
Support voter ID requirement	.41	(.20)*	1.51	.15	(.20)	1.16	.09	(.14)	1.10
Support felon voting restrictions	.37	(.17)*	1.45	.65	(.15)***	1.91	–.32	(.15)*	.73

Note: "PC Concern" includes all randomized groups. Results are from binomial logistic regression models predicting binary variables for whether or not respondents voted for each candidate, separately. "*O.R.*" indicates odds ratios. Each row represents a separate regression model controlling for party ID, ideology, age, sex, education, type of community, household income, and race ("PC Concern" models also control for experimental condition). $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

be a powerful predictor of candidate preference, particularly with regard to support for Trump, supporting *H3*. These results suggest that (a) PC concern reflects concerns aimed at minority groups broadly (rather than any particular group) and is highest among those who are most in favor of protecting that status quo (Whites, conservatives, and Republicans), and (b) PC concern was a major factor in the candidate people supported in the 2016 presidential election.

"Make America Great Again" List Experiment

Next, we examine what we argue was a major source of communicating to the public that Trump was the candidate who would represent the anti-PC movement: the MAGA slogan. To empirically test our hypotheses on this front, we ran a list experiment as part of the same Delaware Politics Survey discussed earlier.

The list experiment (also known as an "item-count" technique) is an unobtrusive approach to detecting endorsement of ideas deemed sensitive or socially undesirable (e.g., Glynn, 2013; Heerwig & McCabe, 2009; Kuklinski et al., 1997; Redlawsk et al., 2010). List experiments randomize respondents to baseline and treatment conditions and ask them to indicate "how many" items in a fixed list they believe meet a subjective criterion. Those randomized to the treatment condition receive a full set of items containing one sensitive, K^{th}, item, while those randomized to the baseline condition receive a set containing K-1 items. The list experiment affords a level of privacy to the respondent with the hope they would be willing to provide honest answers on the sensitive subject and, at the same time, provides investigators an ability to still tease out meaningful effects. Response distributions and central tendency and variation statistics are compared to identify the extent to which respondents endorse the K^{th} item. Statistically significant differences in means and proportions across the baseline and treatment conditions indicate that the content of the treatment item reflects broader opinion.

The quality of a list experiment is heavily dependent on the nature of the control items and their relationship to the experimental item (see Redlawsk et al., 2010). The items in the baseline condition should be relatively benign in content, have some independence from one another, and have some discriminatory ability. In addition, the control and experimental target items should fit in the same conceptual box, and thus, the target item should not appear too distinct such that its inclusion makes it stand out too much.

In our list experiment control group, interviewers asked respondents to report how many of three statements represented aspects of Donald Trump's MAGA slogan. As opposed to meaningless or vacuous items, the baseline items attempt to control for alternative perceptions of the slogan. Trump himself referred to the slogan in terms of the United States possessing a stronger military and military presence, and he criticized government regulations on hindering financial and economic progress. Including hollow items in the baseline would inflate both treatments; thus, we include references to alternative explanations of the MAGA slogan in the baseline or control items. Specifically, the list experiment in our survey asked respondents how many of the following statements Donald Trump meant in his MAGA slogan:[5]

1 Strengthen America's military presence in the world
2 Have politicians follow the voice of their constituents
3 Stop the government from regulating business

In addition to this baseline condition, the experiment contains three treatments, one race neutral and two that are racialized. The first treatment added the statement:

4 Make it okay to NOT be so politically correct about people

The other two treatments replaced the word "people" with "racial minority groups" and "African Americans," respectively.

Subtracting the mean response for the control group from the mean response from treatment group produces an estimate of the proportion of the population who believed that Donald Trump's MAGA slogan was referring to a time when it was okay to not be politically correct about non-racial and racial groups (Table 4.A2 in the appendix provides the list experiment's design and question wording). For example, if the mean number of items selected under the control condition is 2.4 and the mean number of items under a treatment condition is 3.1, then the difference of .70 equates to an estimated 70% of individuals who include the treatment item in their list count relative to when a baseline list of conditions are provided. This number is considered the effect of the treatment.

List Experiment Results

The list experiment results for respondents are provided in Table 4.2. A sizeable percentage within each treatment group – African Americans (22%), racial minority groups (26%), and people (30%) – stated that all four items in the list represent the MAGA slogan. Moreover, compared to the baseline condition, 85% interpreted the slogan as referring to less PC about people ($t = 6.43$, $p < .01$); 76% interpreted it as referring to less PC about racial minority groups ($t = 6.09$, $p < .01$); and 47% interpreted the slogan as referring to less PC about African Americans ($t = 3.58$, $p < .01$). Substantively, we infer that while a sizeable number of individuals perceived MAGA as targeting racialized PC, the largest percentage (85%) fell among the MAGA PC focus in non-racial terms. We surmise that the public perceives PC as part of MAGA in general, regardless of what specific racial group is under consideration. These findings support *H4a* as well as *H4b*.

Interestingly, as the experimental item moves from general ("people") to specific ("African Americans"), the estimated percentage identifying a fourth item in comparison to the baseline changes from 85% and a mean of 2.32 items to 47% and a mean of 1.94. These shifts imply that there may be reticence to point out specific racial groups as targeted in the MAGA slogan.

Additional analyses splitting the sample across demographic subsamples show that these effects are robust. As shown in Table 4.3, a broad cross-section of the American public saw Trump's MAGA slogan as referring to both PC and racialized PC (columns 1 and 2, respectively), although some subgroups were less likely to view MAGA as related to African Americans, specifically (see column 3). In terms of race, the overall treatment effect was significant across racial groups but substantially larger for Whites than for minorities. For example, Whites had an 83% increase in the number of items chosen as representing MAGA when it

Table 4.2 Responses to list experiment – 2016 Delaware Politics Survey

	Baseline (3 items)	*"People" (4 items)*	*"Racial minorities" (4 items)*	*"African Americans" (4 items)*
Responses	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
0 item	31[a]	17[b]	19[b]	27[a]
1 item	18[a]	15[a]	13[a]	15[a]
2 items	25[a]	16[b]	19[a,b]	17[a,b]
3 items	27[a]	21[a]	22[a]	19[a]
4 items		30[b]	26[b,c]	22[c]
Total	100	100	100	100
N	(206)	(207)	(242)	(227)
Mean	1.47	2.32	2.23	1.94
SD	(1.19)	(1.48)	(1.45)	(1.52)
PCT Diff		85%	76%	47%
t-test w/baseline		6.43***	6.09***	3.58**

Note: $N = 882$. Overall experimental effects on distribution: χ^2 ($df = 12$) $= 78.34$, $p < .01$, and $F(3,878) = 15.3$, $p < .01$, Eta = .223. Each subscript letter denotes a subset of the treatment categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level. The *PCT Diff* is the percentage change in response count due to the treatment statement, and the corresponding independent samples' *t*-statistic tests the null hypothesis that the mean responses between the counts in the representative column are equal to the baseline counts (with significance adjusted using Tukey's HSD adjustments). #$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

was stated as referring to PC regarding "people" relative to the baseline condition, whereas this effect was only 78% among minorities. Further, minorities (66% of whom were African American) were not likely to see MAGA as reflecting PC when it was aimed at African Americans, specifically. Whites also included 68% more items as representing MAGA when it mentioned "African Americans" than in the baseline condition, whereas among minorities, there was no significant difference in the number of items between the baseline and "African Americans" conditions. Similarly, conservatives saw MAGA as reflecting PC broadly and with regard to racial minorities but not with regard to African Americans. Liberals did perceive MAGA as reflecting "African Americans" and had the most notable treatment effect across subgroups in the "People" condition relative to baseline, including 119% more items as representing MAGA. Overall, there was little variation in the interpretation of MAGA in a general sense. On average, Democrats and Republicans, Clinton and Trump supporters, Whites and minorities, all saw MAGA as related to PC broadly and with regard to racial minorities, supporting *H5*. However, there was some variation in interpreting MAGA as related to African Americans.

Table 4.3 List experiment results for demographic and political subgroups – 2016 Delaware Politics Survey

		(Base) "Baseline" (3 items)	*(A) "People" (4 items)*	*(B) "Racial minorities" (4 items)*	*(C) "African Americans" (4 items)*	
Variable	*Subgroup*	*Base*	*(A)-(Base) PCT Diff*	*(B)-(Base) PCT Diff*	*(C)-(Base) PCT Diff*	*Overall F-test*
Race	White	1.70 (1.15)	83%**	74%**	68%**	12.34***
	Minority	.82 (1.03)	78%**	69%**	n.s.	4.16**
Ideology	Liberal	1.42 (1.17)	119%***	95%**	91%**	7.83***
	Conservative	2.01 (1.08)	89%***	75%**	n.s.	9.08***
Party ID	Democrat	0.92 (1.01)	69%***	74%***	46%*	7.33**
	Republican	2.45 (0.75)	88%***	60%***	49%*	10.33***
2016 Cand.	Clinton	0.74 (0.97)	91%***	75%***	54%*	8.52***
Preference	Trump	2.54 (0.59)	91%***	76%***	65%***	17.03***

Note: PCT Diff tests are based on independent samples' t-tests comparing the baseline condition to each treatment difference, using Tukey's HSD significance adjustments for multiple comparisons. The overall F-test is a comparison of the null hypothesis that all means are equal across the conditions. "n.s." = not significant. #$p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$.

Discussion

With the increasingly prevalent role that PC has played in contemporary American society and elsewhere, we undertook this study to shed much-needed light on the contours of PC and its relevance to the 2016 presidential election and to politics broadly. We theorized that PC concern emanates from perceived restrictions on communication in conjunction with perceived threats to the status quo and that PC concern can be leveraged by political candidates to mobilize otherwise a particular subset of voters who are highly motivated to preserve the status quo. We argued these dynamics were particularly at play during the 2016 presidential election but can be extended well beyond the case of Donald Trump.

Our study showed that the target group that is the subject of PC did not matter and that Whites, conservatives, Republicans, and Trump supporters were the most likely to say there is too much PC in society. This pattern indicates support for a broad system justification explanation of the psychological motivations behind opposition to PC, whereby individuals oppose threats to the status quo in general regardless of whether it is a racial, ethnic, gender, or other minority group that is being promoted. Moreover, those most strongly concerned about there being too much of it are those who support the prevailing social hierarchy of the status quo.

Consistent with previous studies, PC concern was a powerful predictor of candidate preference. In models controlling for various common predictors of vote choice (including ideology, partisanship, and several policy attitudes), concerns over PC maintained substantial independent effects. This suggests PC concern is a powerful, robust force in American politics. It is particularly interesting that PC concern did not matter in predicting support for Clinton compared to some other candidate besides Trump. We take this to suggest that concern about PC was especially utilized by Trump, so he was the "anti-PC" candidate, more so than Clinton was the "pro-PC" candidate.

Our list experiment showed that Trump's MAGA slogan was significantly interpreted as implying opposition to PC broadly as well as in relation to racial minorities and, to a lesser extent, African Americans. Thus, although individuals' concerns over PC tend to be related to protecting the status quo regardless of target group, Trump's MAGA slogan mobilized these voters largely (although not exclusively) on the basis of threatening a group's racial status. This means that although MAGA was largely a broad pro-status-quo message, it also acted as an implicit racial appeal by cuing opposition to racial progress without necessarily needing to invoke race explicitly.

This interpretation of MAGA was robust across an array of subgroups, except that minorities and conservatives were unlikely to see MAGA as referring to PC about African Americans specifically. We speculate this finding may be due to several reasons. First, slogans are targeted to speak to particular segments of the population, and so it may be the case that the message behind MAGA about African Americans, in particular, was uniquely communicated to Whites – the audience the message was likely most intended for. Yet this explanation is unlikely to account for conservatives not interpreting MAGA as related to African Americans, as they were likely the intended targets of that aspect of the slogan but were the ideological group least likely to interpret it that way. In this case, it may be that liberals, although not the intended target, were the most attuned at "decoding" the MAGA slogan. Another possibility that may apply to minorities as well as conservatives is simply response bias. That is, when African Americans are asked about PC regarding African Americans, they feel pressured to agree that there is "too much" because otherwise it could be seen as self-serving, or as weakness stemming from the implication that they "rely on" PC to gain power. Similarly, conservatives may be motivated to deny associating MAGA with African Americans due to their avoidance of "making it about race" and the fear that their positive evaluation of the slogan will then be seen as racist. However, these explanations would not explain why Republicans and Trump supporters *do* see MAGA as relating to PC about African Americans. As such, further investigation is warranted.

Overall, our main argument is supported – that PC is a powerful motivator in American politics and can be used to effectively mobilize those who are motivated to protect the status quo. In 2016, Trump seems to have effectively mobilized Whites, conservatives, and Republicans on the basis that he will restore a social hierarchy in which dominant groups maintain power.

This research advances new ground ripe for additional study in how political messages are communicated and received not only throughout society but also by specific groups. The study raises additional questions that are beyond the scope of this chapter, such as, to what extent is PC concern driven by sociodemographic or personality factors versus environmental factors like media consumption? Are the dynamics observed here similar for others who try to mobilize support based on PC concern? Finally, some work suggests race is chronically accessible enough in contemporary politics that there is little difference between the effects of implicit versus explicit racial primes (Valentino et al., 2018). If this is the case, are implicit appeals like "MAGA" necessary for mobilizing Whites on the basis of race, or does the PC concept have unique "benefits" in the fact that they – in and of themselves – call out the social pressures that make implicit racial appeals necessary in the first place? All these questions hold substantial practical and theoretical significance if concerns over PC are, as suggested here, a powerful and growing force in contemporary politics.

Notes

1 For more information on calculating response rates, see https://aapor.org/publications-resources/education-resources/response-rates/
2 The unweighted sample is representative of the Delaware population in terms of race and gender but overrepresents more educated and older residents. The sample was 52% females and 48% males; 33% have a high school degree or lower, 26% have some college, and 42% are four-year college graduates; the median age is 58 (M = 56.6, SD = 18.3). The sample was 39% conservative and 27% liberal, which reflects slightly more conservatives than is typical for the state. In addition, 39% were Republicans and 55% were Democrats, which roughly approximates the partisan make-up of the state.
3 Chi-square tests indicate successful randomization (χ^2 (5, N = 881) = 4.98, p = .42).
4 In models using PC concern, we included variables for each of the target groups relative to the baseline condition as controls. Additional analyses reveal no significant target group x PC concerns or race x PC concerns interaction effects. Full model results are available upon request.
5 Chi-square tests indicate successful randomization of the experimental groups for the sample (χ^2 = 4.28, df = 3, p = .233), Whites (χ^2 = 3.47, df = 3, p = .325), and racial-ethnic minorities (χ^2 = 5.61, df = 3, p = .132).

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Appendix

Political Issues

Legalization of Marijuana: Do you think that the use of marijuana should be made legal or not? (Yes, No, or Don't Know/Refused [volunteered])

Death Penalty for Murder: Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for murder? (Favor, Oppose, or Don't Know/Refused [volunteered])

Federal Minimum Wage: Would you favor or oppose an increase in the federal minimum wage from $7.25 an hour to $15 an hour? (Favor, Oppose, or Don't Know/Refused [volunteered])

Obama Health Care Law: Do you approve or disapprove of the health care law passed by Barack Obama and Congress in 2010? (Approve, Disapprove, or Don't Know/Refused [volunteered])

Voter ID: (Now, please tell me how strongly you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements. [Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, or Don't Know/Refused (volunteered)]). People should be required to show PHOTO identification in order to vote.

Felon Voting Restrictions: (Now, please tell me how strongly you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements. [Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, or Don't Know/Refused (volunteered)]). Persons convicted of a felony should not be allowed to vote.

Presidential Candidate Preference

If the presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Hillary Clinton the Democrat, Donald Trump the Republican, Gary Johnson the Libertarian, and Jill Stein of the Green Party, who would you vote for?

"Too Much Political Correctness" Experiment (Randomize to 1 of 5 Conditions)

Baseline: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat DISagree, or strongly DISagree that one of the biggest problems in this country is being too politically correct?

Politics: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat DISagree, or strongly DISagree that one of the biggest problems in this country is being too politically correct when talking about politics?

Race: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat DISagree, or strongly DISagree that one of the biggest problems in this country is being too politically correct when talking about race?

Gender: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat DISagree, or strongly DISagree that one of the biggest problems in this country is being too politically correct when talking about gender?

Immigration: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat DISagree, or strongly DISagree that one of the biggest problems in this country is being too politically correct when talking about immigration?

Religion: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat DISagree, or strongly DISagree that one of the biggest problems in this country is being too politically correct when talking about religion?

Table 4.A1 Logistic regression models predicting candidate preference – 2016 Delaware Politics Survey

	Prefer Trump (vs. Clinton)			*Prefer Trump (vs. Other)*			*Prefer Other (vs. Clinton)*		
	B	(S.E.)	O.R.	B	(S.E.)	O.R.	B	(S.E.)	O.R.
Intercept/demographics									
(Intercept)	–2.18	(1.86)		–4.40	(1.55)**		3.13	(1.39)*	
Race (Minorities = 1)	–1.05	(.64)	.35	–.68	(.62)	.51	–.82	(.44)#	.44
Age	–.01	(.01)	.99	.01	(.01)	1.01	–.03	(.01)**	.97
Education level	.10	(.16)	1.11	.05	(.12)	1.05	–.02	(.12)	.98
Household income	.06	(.12)	1.06	–.03	(.09)	.97	<.01	(.09)	1.00
Sex (Female = 1)	–.31	(.48)	.73	–.31	(.40)	.73	–.62	(.38)	.54
Area (Suburban = 1)	–1.27	(.66)#	.28	.23	(.46)	1.25	–1.26	(.48)**	.28
Area (Urban = 1)	–2.43	(1.12)*	.09	.43	(.89)	.97	–1.35	(.80)#	.26
Ideology	.23	(.27)	1.26	.67	(.33)**	1.96	–.28	(.22)	.76
Party ID (Dem. = 1)	–4.23	(.51)***	.01	–2.27	(.55)***	.10	–2.54	(.50)***	.08
Party ID (Ind. = 1)	–2.68	(.93)**	.07	–4.20	(.86)***	.01	.66	(.67)	1.93
Policy attitudes									
Obama health care	2.45	(.50)***	11.61	–.65	(.57)	.51	2.31	(.38)***	10.12
Minimum wage	–.03	(.49)	.97	–1.34	(.51)**	.26	.66	(.42)	1.94
Legalize marijuana	1.36	(.50)**	3.91	1.12	(.41)**	3.06	.08	(.44)	1.08
Death penalty	.22	(.50)	1.25	.43	(.42)	1.54	–.31	(.39)	.73
Voter ID	–.05	(.28)	.95	–.08	(.26)	.92	<.01	(.20)	1.00
Felon voting	.29	(.20)	1.34	.48	(.17)**	1.61	–.33	(.18)#	.72
Political correctness									
Anti-PC sentiment	.55	(.25)*	1.73	.66	(.22)**	1.94	.24	(.18)	1.28
Experiment controls									
Subject: Politics	.99	(.88)	2.69	.21	(.68)	1.24	.49	(.65)	1.63
Subject: Race	.77	(.78)	2.16	.61	(.65)	1.84	.44	(.65)	1.55
Subject: Gender	.50	(.81)	1.65	1.12	(.65)#	3.07	.50	(.67)	1.66
Subject: Immigration	.34	(.79)	1.41	.52	(.65)	1.68	–.08	(.65)	.93
Subject: Religion	–.22	(.77)	.80	–.03	(.69)	.97	.34	(.61)	1.41
Model summary statistics									
N	540			300			420		
-2LL	160.89			199.73			221.06		
Chi²	560.81***			166.79***			215.39***		
df	517			277			397		
Pseudo R^2	.827			.598			.629		

Note: Results are from binomial logistic regression models predicting binary variables for whether or not respondents voted for each candidate, separately. "O.R." indicates odds ratios. #$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 4.A2 "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) list experimental design

Introduction:

As you may know, Donald Trump uses the slogan, "Make America Great Again." Now I am going to read a list of three things. After I read all three, just tell me HOW MANY of them you think Donald Trump means when he says that. I don't want to know which ones, just HOW MANY. Here's the list:

Baseline condition:

1. Strengthen America's military presence in the world.
2. Have politicians follow the voice of their constituents.
3. Stop the government from regulating business.

Non-Racial treatment:

4. Make it okay to NOT be so politically correct about people.

Racial Minorities treatment:

4. Make it okay to NOT be so politically correct about racial minority groups.

African Americans treatment:

4. Make it okay to NOT be so politically correct about African Americans.

5 The Co-Cultural Communicative Practices of Refugees' Twitter Accounts

Andrea Hickerson

The number of refugees worldwide has doubled over the past ten years, with 82.4 million people displaced by late 2020 (International Rescue Committee, 2022). While the reasons for and locations of refugee displacement vary, refugee crises occur with alarming frequency and are ripe opportunities for misinformation. For example, a video of Afghani men on an airplane circulated widely in August 2021 and was described as refugees leaving Kabul after the U.S. military withdrawal. However, the photo was actually of Afghani men returning from Turkey to Afghanistan in 2018 (Sadeghi, 2021).

Media studies of refugees generally focus on either how the mass media portray refugees or how refugees use communication technology and social media to build community when faced with dislocation and resettlement. While the former often reveal negative and stereotypical portrayals of refugees and the potential consequences of their consumption by Western audiences (e.g., Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Heidenreich et al., 2019), the latter tend to highlight the positive impacts of social media on refugee resettlement (e.g., Alencar, 2018; Godin & Doná, 2016). This study seeks to bridge these two areas of research by exploring if and how refugee accounts on Twitter counter prevailing mass media stereotypes.

Twitter, a widely available social media platform, reaches 68.7 million users in the United States and 152 million worldwide (Clement, 2020). It affords refugees and refugee organizations the opportunity to network both with each other and with non-refugees. Notably, Twitter is also considered the most important social network for journalists, who use the platform for research, audience engagement, and recruiting sources (Lieberman, 2020). So, in addition to potentially allowing refugees engage with non-refugees, refugees on Twitter have the potential to influence the work of mainstream media journalists.

Acknowledging the power deficit refugees face, both by definition and with regard to mass media narratives, this chapter draws on co-cultural theory, which acknowledges the power differentials between dominant

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and non-dominant groups (Orbe, 1998). Co-cultural theory posits that non-dominant groups use specific communication strategies to negotiate their status. This study adopts a subset of those strategies as variables to content analyze the messages shared by refugee accounts on Twitter. Results of this analysis suggest individuals and organizations share the same communication strategies and match Orbe's (1998) description of an assertive-accommodation communication orientation. However, the results also show that refugee-related accounts on Twitter are more likely to focus on refugee stories as breaking news tied to current events and less on the process of resettlement and integration.

Literature Review

News Portrayals of Refugees

Understanding the refugee experience requires understanding that the process and success of refugee resettlement in host countries can be deeply affected by local and national politics (Bynner, 2019; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015; Scribner, 2017). For example, refugee acceptance in the United States dropped significantly after the terrorist attacks of September 2001, as fears about terrorism and Islamophobia took hold (Bose, 2018; Scribner, 2017). Part of the problem is that refugee host communities have few opportunities to learn about refugees before meeting them face to face. There are very few examples of media content that are produced by refugees and accessible to external audiences. Even when reporters who are not refugees themselves are interested in reporting from refugee camps, they are sometimes restricted from accessing those sites altogether (Jack, 2017).

The refugee media coverage that does exist is often disjointed and difficult to discern from other terms like "migrant," "immigrant," or "asylum seeker" (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). In the United States, coverage of refugees is often devoid of the international context and localized within the culture and news coverage where the refugees are physically resettled. They often appear in feature rather than news stories and emphasize refugees "needing" and a community's penchant for "giving" care (Hickerson & Dunsmore, 2016, p. 435). Internationally, coverage of refugees is also predominately negative, often portraying them as a threat to national security, health, and the economy (Abid et al., 2017; Heidenreich et al., 2019).

The impact of negative media coverage on public opinion about refugees is well documented. Older people who tend to rely more on mass media than social media for their news consumption appear most susceptible (Debrael et al., 2021), and even people who have positive interpersonal interactions with refugees can still be influenced by mass media portrayals (Arlt et al., 2019; Schemer & Meltzer, 2020). At present, there is little research on how refugees reframe mainstream media discourse through social media, which

is more readily accessible to refugees. Some exceptions are studies about an infamous photo of three-year-old, Kurdish-Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi's body on a Turkish beach in 2015 (Blommaert, 2015; Giaxoglous & Spilioti, 2020; Vis & Goriunova, 2015). The photo went viral and brought attention to the political machinations behind the reported "refugee crisis" in Europe (Blommaert, 2015). An analysis of tweets using the hashtag #JeSuisAylan, a phrase crafted to draw attention to the Syrian refugee crisis, demonstrates how users often reshared the story photo along with the hashtag (Giaxoglous & Spilioti, 2020). Consequently, the circulation of the story was enhanced as one of suffering and allowed Twitter users to participate in the retelling of the story. This type of sharing "affirmed" the story of suffering "instead of investigating widely shared stories in relation to the 'bigger' stories of war and power" (p. 23).

Refugees on Social Media

To the extent that refugees use social media, the ubiquity of communication technology has transformed the refugee experience. Smartphones, for example, have become an essential tool for refugees who rely on them to obtain news and maintain interactions with family and friends (Wall et al., 2017). Even non-refugees have come to understand and legitimize refugee smartphone and social media use beyond being a novelty or luxury unbefitting their circumstance (Alarcon et al., 2019).

A wide array of disciplines, from communication to social work and health care, have studied the important ways social media are used by refugees and can be used to influence and support their resettlement (Alencar, 2018; Marlowe 2020; Pottie et al, 2020). Often the goal in resettlement is "integrative adaptation," an outcome that requires acceptance of the community by the refugee as well as acceptance of the refugee by the host community (Davenport, 2017, p. 358). Potential barriers to adaptive integration for refugees include trauma, economic uncertainty, lack of education, and/or vocation (Bose, 2018; Davenport, 2017). Potential barriers in host communities include access to social services and cultural and practical community knowledge (Bynner, 2019; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015; Scribner, 2017).

While each host country has its unique history and temporal attitude toward refugee resettlement (Dunsmore & Hickerson, 2020; Heidenreich et al., 2019), research on social media and refugees has demonstrated how its community-building capabilities can bolster psychological, social, and material support (Alencar, 2018; Marlowe, 2020; Pottie et al., 2020). Some countries have even built special apps for refugees to communicate securely and freely, without judgment or baiting by non-refugees. Not surprisingly, how and why refugees use social media are related to the boundaries of the platform. A refugee-specific app or a closed network, like a text group

or private Facebook group, is conducive to intragroup networking, while participation in more open social media platforms allows refugees to orient themselves, monitor, and evaluate dominant cultural norms and practices (Alencar, 2018). Of course, there is also a well-documented dark side to open, unrestricted participation on social media platforms, as explained by Marlowe (2020): "Social media provide a forum in which people can quickly establish opinions as 'fact' with little to no evidence – fake news, sensationalized political commentary and voyeuristic media portrayals influence refugees' interactions and opportunities to engage with civic society" (p. 287). In other words, while social media can build community, it can reify and exacerbate differences, amplifying or even extending many of the negative portrayals in mass media (Sutkute, 2019).

Co-Cultural Theory

Anchored in the framework of co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1996, 1998), this project foregrounds the asymmetrical power relationship between refugees exhibited in their *lived* and *mediated* experiences. This theory articulates "how those without societal power communicate with persons who are privileged within dominant structures" (Orbe, 1998, p. 4). Using the term "co-culture" – instead of a more common label such as "minority group" – to describe refugees acknowledges the symbiotic, complex, and multi-directional influence between cultural groups, and, as such, is akin to the concept of "adaptive integration" described earlier as the goal of refugee resettlement (Davenport, 2017).

Among the "basic truths" of co-cultural theory is the assumption that groups are positioned in a hierarchy, with men, European Americans, heterosexuals, and individuals in similar positions of privilege at the top of the hierarchy. Another premise is that dominant groups in the hierarchy "create and maintain communication systems that reflect, reinforce, and promote their field of experiences" (Orbe, 1998, p. 11). This means that less privileged groups must adopt the communication norms of dominant groups to be "successful." That said, co-cultural theory advances the notion that co-cultures have the opportunity to shift prevalent opinions.

With roots in muted group theory, which articulates how language is used to exclude already marginalized groups (Ardener, 2005), as well as standpoint epistemology, which foregrounds the role of personal experience of marginalized groups in how they challenge the status quo (Harding, 1992), co-cultural theory is founded on a phenomenological approach. This approach details how minority groups (broadly conceived) use certain communication strategies "when functioning within the confines of public communicative structures" (Orbe, 1998, p. 7). Orbe identifies 26 different, but not mutually exclusive, communication strategies and maps them

to six different influences. The first three influences are based on the preferred outcome of the group. If *separation* is the preferred outcome, group members will distance themselves from the dominant group and nurture a separate identity. If *accommodation* is the goal, group members will seek a multicultural approach, prioritizing "the acceptance or inclusion of cultural differences as meaningful, valuable and legitimate" (Orbe, 1998, p. 92). If *assimilation* is the goal, group members focus on conforming to the culture of the dominant group. The second set of influences on communication practices are communication orientations, or the stance co-cultural members take when engaging within dominant social structures. Here, Orbe differentiates between *non-assertive communication*, which avoids confrontation; the generally more confrontational *aggressive communication*; and *assertive practices* that demonstrate a willingness to engage with dominant groups without being strongly confrontational. Table 5.1 is a reproduction of Orbe's co-cultural communication strategies mapped to the range of preferred outcomes and communication practices (Orbe, 1998, p. 15).

In the more than two decades since Orbe's seminal piece, a broad swath of scholarly studies have examined co-cultural theory and communication orientations. For example, Jun and colleagues (2021) used co-cultural theory to explain Asian Americans' responses to COVID-19 racism,

Table 5.1 Orbe's (1998) co-cultural communication orientations

	Separation	*Accommodation*	*Assimilation*
Non-Assertive	• Avoiding • Maintaining interpersonal barriers	• Increasing visibility • Dispelling stereotypes	• Emphasizing commonalities • Developing positive face • Censoring self • Averting controversy
Assertive	• Communicating self • Intragroup networking • Exemplifying strengths • Embracing stereotypes	• Communicating self • Intragroup networking • Utilizing liaisons • Educating others	• Extensive preparation • Overcompensating • Manipulating stereotypes • Bargaining
Aggressive	• Attacking • Sabotaging others	• Confronting • Gaining advantage	• Dissociating • Mirroring • Strategic distancing • Ridiculing self

finding that identity salience and previous experience with discrimination were associated with higher levels of non-assertive communication and lower levels of aggressive practices. Other studies have applied co-cultural theory to queer identity, with results suggesting that degree of outness, or the extent to which individuals are open about their identity, was most predictive of participants' co-cultural communication practices (Fox & Warber, 2015).

Beyond simple application of co-cultural theory, researchers have further developed the approach. For example, Zirulnik and Orbe (2019) extended the original typology of communication practices in their study of Black female pilots to include rationalization, or the provision of alternative explanations for individuals' actions, and strategic alliance building, which refers to co-cultural group members' strategic decisions to "gain esoteric social alliances from dominant co-cultural group members" (p. 87). Similarly, some have sought to integrate co-cultural theory with other theoretical domains. For example, co-cultural theory and the organizational socialization model can be used in tandem to examine how those with disabilities negotiate workplace assimilation (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, co-cultural theory provides an appropriate framework to study how refugees use social media to engage with non-refugees in an open platform where non-refugees still have the benefit of norm setting and hold the dominant perspective. Notably, however, social media platforms like Twitter, the context for this study, do not require one to declare refugee status in their bio. Therefore, anyone who does is deliberately and voluntarily foregrounding their status as a member of or related to a marginalized group. To understand who might put themselves out there, drawing attention to difference, the first research question is:

> ***RQ1:*** *Which accounts self-identify as "refugee" on Twitter?*

Next, an account that describes itself as related to refugees does not necessarily post only about refugees. Perhaps their bio status is unrelated to their content entirely. Perhaps not, but to what extent? Therefore, the second research question is:

> ***RQ2:*** *What topics are the focus of tweets by refugee accounts?*

Finally, Orbe offers specific strategies that minority group members can use to engage with dominant groups. Using these as a guide, in cases where refugee accounts do post specifically about refugees, the last research question is:

> ***RQ3:*** *What communicative strategies do refugee accounts use when posting about refugees on Twitter?*

Method

To answer these research questions, this study relies on a content analysis of one month of tweets by verified Twitter accounts that included the term "refugee" in their self-written bio. To be verified by Twitter and receive the blue check badge next to one's Twitter handle signifies that Twitter has deemed the account "authentic, notable, and active." This criterion favors governmental organizations, companies, brands, and prominent individuals, including journalists, activists, and celebrities. On the one hand, they denote power, a category from which refugees, by definition, often find themselves excluded. On the other hand, this group of verified refugee accounts is, practically speaking, the most likely list of accounts a non-refugee would interact with and trust on Twitter.

Tweets from verified "refugee" Twitter accounts from September 1 to October 1, 2020, were collected through Brandwatch, a proprietary social media listening platform and "Twitter Certified Product" with access to all historical and real-time Twitter data. Brandwatch identified 16,950 tweets from 95 different accounts with "refugee" in the bio during this time period. A 20% random sample drawn yielded 3,390 tweets that were then filtered by removing comments and replies to focus on original tweets and retweets. After evaluating each Twitter bio, six accounts were excluded because they were using "refugee" in the metaphorical sense (e.g., "Recovering California Refugee," "newspaper refugee"), and another four were excluded because they did not tweet at all during the sample timeframe. This data cleaning reduced the final sample to 1,595 tweets from 85 different accounts.

In addition to the text of the tweet, Brandwatch can categorize tweets by a number of variables including location, type of account (individual or organization), gender, number of Twitter followers, and topic. Given concerns about Brandwatch's artificial intelligence (AI)-driven analysis (Hayes et al., 2021), manual coding was performed as well.

Based on a subsample of 160 tweets (10% of the content retrieved), three coders coded each tweet for specific topics: (1) topic 1 (e.g., U.S. politics); (2) topic 2 (e.g., entertainment) (Krippendorff's alpha = .86). Coders also coded whether the tweet was explicitly about refugees or not (Krippendorff's alpha = .95). An example of something not related to refugees would be a tweet about pop culture and general opinions. Finally, in tweets relating to refugees, the content was coded for whether communication strategies were identified (Krippendorff's alpha = .82). Coders identified and recorded as many as two communicative strategies per tweet. Coding took place iteratively in that the topic and strategy categories were refined over a previous shared sample of 160 tweets. Given the short structural limitations of a single 280-character tweet, the coders ultimately identified and agreed on reducing Orbe's list of 26 strategies to the following ten listed in Table 5.2, which reproduces Orbe's (1998) definitions of the communicative strategies identified in this study and how they were operationalized for coders in the refugee context.

Table 5.2 Co-cultural communicative practices summary

Strategy	*Definition (Examples)*
Geared toward SEPARATION	
Intragroup networking	Identifying and working with other refugees who share common philosophies, convictions, and goals *(e.g., a specific group or person who is or works with refugees is tagged in the tweet)*
Exemplifying strengths	Promoting the recognition of refugees' strengths, past accomplishments, and contributions to society (*e.g., praising refugees' accomplishments or innovations)*
Embracing stereotypes	Accepting a stereotype of refugees but talking about them in a positive manner (*e.g., describes the negative aspects of the refugee experience but describes them as necessary or part of an important higher-level journey)*
Geared toward ACCOMMODATION	
Dispelling stereotypes	Myths of generalized refugee characteristics and behaviors are countered; critiquing stereotypes *(e.g., fact-checking or debunking a claim by a political official or news story)*
Utilizing liaisons	Identifying specific non-refugee members who can be trusted for support, guidance, and assistance *(e.g., someone specific is tagged in a tweet)*
Educating others	Taking the role of teacher and teaching about refugees; sharing news about refugee conditions *(e.g., share events/panels about refugees, sharing stories of refugees or camps)*
Geared toward ASSIMILATION	
Emphasizing commonalities	Focusing on human similarities while downplaying or ignoring refugee differences *(e.g., "refugees are like everyone else")*
Averting controversy	Averting communication away from controversial or potentially dangerous subject areas (possibly away from refugees) *(e.g., drawing attention away from refugees such as through "whataboutism")*
Dissociating	Making a concerted effort to elude any connection with behaviors typically associated with refugees *(e.g., "I wouldn't do that"; "we aren't like them")*
Ridiculing self	Invoking or participating in discourse, either passively or actively, that is demeaning to refugees *(e.g., making fun of refugees, criticizing refugees behavior)*

Results

Self-Identified Refugee Accounts on Twitter

Of the 85 verified Twitter accounts with the term "refugee" in their bio that tweeted between September 1 and October 1, 2020, 65% (N = 55) were held by individuals and 35% (N = 30) by organizations. Of the individuals who identified as refugee on their Twitter accounts, 18 were male and 21 were female. The remaining 16 accounts did not identify their sex.

Table 5.3 lists the individual refugee accounts that tweeted the most during the period of data collection (accounting for roughly one-half of the tweets analyzed). Of the seven listed, five are journalists or writers, and five are located in the United States. To illustrate and contextualize these patterns, it is worth taking a closer look at these accounts. Collectively they demonstrate the breadth of cultural origins and richness of experiences of these public personae.

The most active account was managed by award-winning writer Porochista Khakpour (@PKhakpour), who was born in Iran, entered the United States as a refugee, and lives in New York City. Khakpour has published a number of novels, essays, and feature stories in outlets like the *New York Times*, *Salon*, and the *Daily Beast*. Drawing from her own experiences and others' recollections, her writings tend to revolve around themes of struggle and identity, ranging from living with chronic illness to immigrant life in the United States.

Another prolific account stems from New York-based writer and activist Rafael Shimunov (@rafaelshimunov, Twitter name "raf bardigang cadet"). A Jewish refugee from Uzbekistan, Shimunov regularly posts about social and political issues such as free speech and human rights, particularly as they relate to immigrants. His Twitter bio expresses support for a host of organizations that improve opportunity, equality, and inclusion; fight against racial and economic injustice; or criticize Israel's occupation of Palestine territories.

Hailing from Somalia, growing up in Kenya and Ethiopia, and now residing in the United States, Mukthar Ibrahim's account (@mukhtaryare) provides refugee-oriented content and features a highly lauded nonprofit news journal. Ibrahim is the editor of the *Sahan Journal*, an independent, nonprofit digital newsroom that reports on immigrants and communities of color in Minnesota. Touching on aspects of identity, its mission is to illuminate how these groups are "changing and redefining what it means to be a Minnesotan" ("About Sahan Journal," 2022).

Substantive Twitter traffic was also generated by Eritrean-born and Sweden-based journalist and human rights activist Meron Estefanos (@meronina). Estefanos is a contributor to one of the major Eritrean diaspora news sites, *Asmarino,* and is a radio presenter for *Radio Erena* (a Paris-based Tigrinya-language station broadcasting by satellite to Eritrea). She also cofounded the International Commission on Eritrean Refugees, an advocacy organization focused on Eritrean refugees and victims of human trafficking and torture.

As a former U.S. army veteran and former journalist who focuses on national security and foreign policy, Max Rosenthal (@maxjrosenthal) reported on the European refugee crisis in the 2010s. His stories on

Table 5.3 Most prolific individual Twitter accounts

Account	*Bio/Description*	*Location*	*Number of Twitter followers*	*Tweets in sample (N = 1,595)*
@PKhakpour	5th book TEHRANGELES: A NOVEL forthcoming @ PantheonBooks. Iranian-American writer, prof, activist, ENFP, refugee who needs a new refuge, Radical Left // she/her	New York, U.S.	28,211	7.9% (*N* = 126)
@maxjrosenthal	Former journalist. Current refugee hype man. Son Heung-min enthusiast. #COYS	Washington DC, U.S.	9,783	5.5% (*N* = 88)
@SunniAndTheCity	Middays 10am–2pm @WPGC 95.5! Contributing Host @Fox5DC #FOX5LION | Philanthropist| | Author| Purchase My Book "Still I Shine" Refugee To Radio	Washington DC, U.S.	30,974	5.4% (*N* = 86)
@mukhtaryare	I run @SahanJournal, a nonprofit newsroom that covers Minnesota's immigrant & refugee communities WhatsApp/Signal: +1 651-983-1550 : editor@sahanjournal.com	Minneapolis, MN, U.S.	54,839	4.1% (*N* = 66)
@meronina	Journalist & refugee advocate. Tweets mainly about refugees, human rights & Eritrea. Contact: meron@eirr.org. +46737444385. RT's = not endorsement.	Stockholm, Sweden	17,567	3.8% (*N* = 60)
@rafaelshimunov	@JesusLovesLR pod, @jfrejnyc board, @thejewishvote cofounder, @cpdaction @workingfamilies @policylink alum, @ifnotnoworg stan, jew of color refugee	New York, U.S.	39,465	3.6% (*N* = 57)
@sidowen5	An actor has to burn inside with an outer ease. Writer of my own opinions and thoughts. For #ClimateChange and Refugee rights. Up for baseball. RT's not endorsement.	Not specified	134,968	2.6% (*N* = 42)

Note: Data retrieved in September 2020.

refugees have appeared in outlets including *The Washington Post* and *Mother Jones*. Sharing similar professional and personal experiences and ideals as the aforementioned individuals, he worked for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), which advocates for and provides humanitarian aid to refugees.

Also among the top producers of tweets is Sunni, a contributing television host, former radio host at a DC-based station, and owner of the account SUNNI and the City (@SunniAndTheCity). Sunni's account features her book "Still I Shine," which portrays her life trajectory: from living in refugee camps as a child to growing up in Michigan (her parents emigrated to the United States in the 1990s) to becoming a media personality, the first Bosnian woman on mainstream U.S. radio.

Lastly, Pragmatic Grizzly (@sidowen5) is a personally unidentifiable ("writer of my own opinions and thoughts") and geographically diffuse account, using "everywhere" as a location tag. The owner regularly posts about climate change and human rights, particularly with regard to refugees and conflicts around the world. Interestingly, of all seven individual accounts listed here, this account has tweeted the least but has by far the most followers. It provides a mix of own views and retweets from established news organizations, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and political elites.

Taken together, these accounts are run by highly active writers and human rights activists with rich insights that are based on either their own lived experiences as a refugee (e.g., Shimunov) or their observed experiences in conflict zones (e.g., Rosenthal). For nearly all, Twitter is used as a platform to also promote content using other formats (e.g., books, essays, journals, radio shows) – and ultimately give voice to refugees.

In contrast to the individual accounts, all of the most prolific organizational Twitter accounts are located outside the United States. Four of the five are affiliated with the United Nations (UN). Details are presented in Table 5.4.

The most prolific account with a focus on refugee issues is managed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency (@Refugees), whose mission is to provide life-saving support to, and protect the rights and well-being of, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless and displaced people, and all those who are forced to flee. Nearly every tenth tweet in the sample can be attributed to this account. A sizable amount of Twitter traffic was also generated by the UK branch (@UNHCRUK), the Canadian branch (@UNHCRCanada), and the Tanzanian branch (@UNHCRTanzania) of the UN Refugee Agency. Collectively, these three account for nearly as much content as UNHCR's main account. United by the same general mission, their descriptions only differ in terms

Table 5.4 Most prolific organizational Twitter accounts

Account	*Description*	*Location*	*Number of Twitter followers*	*Tweets in sample (N = 1,595)*
@Refugees	We are #UNHCR, the @UN Refugee Agency. We save lives and protect the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people, and all who are forced to flee.	Unlisted	2,499,550	10.2% (*N* = 162)
@UNHCRUK	UN Refugee Agency in the UK – Regularly tweeting on refugee protection, asylum, and immigration issues. Follow us at http://facebook.com/UNHCR #WithRefugees	London, England	62,317	4.4% (*N* = 70)
@UNHCRCanada	The UN Refugee Agency in Canada is dedicated to providing life-saving support to refugees, displaced, and stateless people. Find us on Facebook and Instagram!	Ottawa, Canada	31,172	4.2% (*N* = 67)
@scotrefcouncil	Scotland's national refugee charity. Celebrating diversity & raising awareness about issues faced by refugees. Co-ordinators of #RefugeeFestScot.	Glasgow, Scotland	21,156	2.0% (*N* = 32)
@UNHCRTanzania	UN Refugee Agency for Tanzania. Protecting the rights and well-being of refugees. Learn more: http://unhcr.org	Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania	4,558	1.2% (*N* = 19)

Note: Data retrieved in September 2020.

of the references to other social media platforms and digital contents (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, official website). All four accounts regularly share (tweet and retweet) digital content that highlights not only facts and statistics to show the extent of refugee crises worldwide but also personal stories to create empathy and build rapport. These accounts are used to show the organizations' work and impact and to offer visitors a variety of ways to provide support to refugees.

The only organizational account not affiliated with the UN is the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC, @scotrefcouncil), an independent, refugee-oriented charity based in Glasgow. According to its website, SRC's goal is to celebrate diversity and raise awareness about issues faced by refugees. While the content shared by the SRC resembles that of the other organizational accounts in many ways – promoting local events to learn about and get in contact with refugees through both stories of success (integration, acceptance, resilience) and tragedy (suffering, injustice, anti-refugee policies) – it does so with a more regional focus on Scotland.

Topics of the Refugee-Oriented Twitter Messages

Table 5.5 summarizes the topics of all tweets. Notably, almost all organizational tweets (98.4%, N = 361) were coded as international because they all described events outside the United States. The following two tweets exemplify this message pattern. The first one comes from the official main account of the UNHCR (@Refugees), whereas the second tweet was sent from the organization's branch in Jordan (@UNHCRJordan). Both underline the important role organizations play in sharing

Table 5.5 Tweets by topic and type of Twitter account

Topic	*Overall share* (%)	*Organizational accounts (%)*	*Individual accounts (%)*
International affairs	44.2	98.4	28.0
U.S. politics	18.6	–	24.2
Personal opinions	13.7	0.5	17.6
Sport and entertainment	9.9	0.5	12.8
Health	6.3	0.5	8.1
Other	5.0	–	6.4
Technology	2.3	–	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1,595	367	1,228

refugee-related information from around the world with a broader social media audience:

> A large fire destroyed an asylum center in Moria on the island of Lesvos in Greece on Tuesday night. No casualties have been reported, thanks to local authorities who helped contain the fire. UNHCR staff are offering assistance to the Greek authorities. (https://t.co/zByNrLs7d0)
>
> RT @FilippoGrandi As always, a substantive, quality discussion with Prime Minister @OmarRazzaz. Few countries match Jordan's commitment to hosting refugees, even under the current, difficult circumstances. It is absolutely imperative that Jordan's burden be shared – more – by donor partners. (https://t.co/Yn1a6EgFdQ)

Similarly, international affairs also dominated the individual tweets (28%, *N* = 344) though to a lesser extent. To illustrate, a retweet sent by Lilianne Fan (@LilianneFan), chair of the Rohyngia working group at the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), not only praised New Zealand's refugee resettlement program but also pointed out that the underlying problem, offshore processing of asylum seekers in detention centers in other countries, continues:

> RT @drgrahamthom Still gives me goosebumps seeing @BehrouzBoochani free and getting on with his life in New Zealand, however 350 people still remain on Nauru and PNG, surely now is the time to accept New Zealand's offer to resettle them #GameOver @amnestyOz

The following retweet by Minnesota congresswoman Ilhan Omar (@ IlhanMN), who was born in Somalia and spent part of her childhood in a refugee camp in Kenya, exemplifies United States-focused content that praises refugees' contributions to American society and the economy (while also criticizing Trump prior to the 2020 general election). This type of content constitutes every fourth tweet coming from individual accounts (24.2%, *N* = 297):

> RT @brhodes Refugees – from the Holocaust to Vietnam to Somalia – made this country great. Started businesses, enriched communities, made us better. They're much more American than this fascist lightweight.

In addition, solely personal opinions are reflected in roughly every sixth tweet sent from individual accounts (17.6%, *N* = 216). Such opinions can be seen by the following message of praise sent by someone (and retweeted by) the account owner, Rukmini Callimachi (@rcallimachi), *New York*

Times journalist, NBC analyst, and former Associated Press bureau chief and refugee:

> RT @MarieLamensch84 What I love about @rcallimachi is not only her investigative reporting but the way she tells stories. It's riveting and humane. (https://t.co/JlCGccGPeV)

Roughly one in eight tweets sent from individual accounts describes a sports or entertainment event (12.8%, *N* = 157), like the following message from Mukhtar M. Ibrahim (@mukhtaryare) demonstrates:

> RT @IHirsi You know, @TheJeffBissoy, I need more soccer stories now. (cc: @mukhtaryare) Minnesota brothers Brian and Michael Vang lift Hmong soccer into the pro ranks. (https://t.co/e1OOjMin6d)

The remainder of individual tweets focused on health topics (8.1%, *N* = 99) and technology (2.9%, *N* = 36), among others.

Communicative Strategies on Twitter's Refugee-Oriented Accounts

Overall, 36.4% of tweets (*N* = 580) in the sample exhibited at least one communicative strategy. Of that total, 18.2% of tweets by individuals and 97.3% of organizational accounts had a strategy. Table 5.6 lists the most frequently used communicative strategies overall, as well as the extent to which these strategies were deployed by individual and organizational accounts. Educating others (62.1%, *N* = 551) and utilizing liaisons (18.1%, *N* = 160) were the most common strategies overall, indicating that much of the Twitter communication – roughly four in five tweets – is geared toward accommodation (see Table 5.2). This is followed by exemplifying refugee strengths (9.4%, *N* = 84) and intragroup networking (5.1%, *N* = 45), two strategies that are geared toward separation. The most common strategy geared toward assimilation was to emphasize commonalities between refugees and non-refugees (4.7%, *N* = 42). Collectively, these five strategies – a fraction of the many potential strategies originally laid out by Orbe (see Table 5.1) – account for almost all of the communication from refugee-oriented Twitter accounts.

Table 5.6 also shows only minimal differences between organizational and individual accounts in terms of the type and frequency of deploying such strategies. Organizations are slightly more likely (83.4%, *N* = 457) than individuals (75.5%, *N* = 255) to use *accommodation*-oriented strategies, primarily educating others and utilizing liaisons – and in rare cases

Table 5.6 Use of communicative strategies

Strategy	*Overall share* (%)	*Use by individuals (%)*	*Use by organizations (%)*
Educating others	62.1	59.8	63.7
Utilizing liaisons	18.1	15.7	19.5
Exemplifying strengths	9.4	12.7	7.5
Intragroup networking	5.1	5.3	4.9
Emphasizing commonalities	4.7	6.2	3.8
Dispelling stereotypes	0.2	0.3	0.2
Embracing stereotypes	0.2	–	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	886	338	548

Note: Multiple codes per tweet possible.

dispelling stereotypes. Individuals, however, are more likely (18%, *N* = 61) than organizations (12.8%, *N* = 70) to use *separation*-oriented strategies, particularly exemplifying refugee strengths and intragroup networking. Individuals were also more likely (6.2%, *N* = 21) than organizations (3.8%, *N* = 21) to use *assimilation*-oriented strategies by emphasizing commonalities, even though this strategy was the least common one overall.

Taking a closer look at the plethora of Twitter messages in the sample reveals a number of more specific patterns associated with each communicative strategy and the linking of particular strategies. The most common strategy, educating others – that is, teaching about refugees and refugee conditions – comes in many forms that typically resemble news segments. Presenting statistical data is an important means for presenting ongoing developments and the extent to which refugees experience plight and hardship worldwide. The following messages from UNHCR's main account as well as Samah Hadid, head of Advocacy, Media & Communications for the Middle East at the Norwegian Refugee Council, remind the reader about those numbers, further emphasized by short instructional videos or animations embedded in those tweets:

> 11 million more people were forced to flee their homes. 5.7 million displaced persons were able to return home. 79.5 million people displaced globally. The arithmetic of forced displacement in 2019. (https://t.co/v16hXpTZfo)
>
> RT @MarkCutts #Syria: Construction of new camps in Idlib continues, following the displacement of nearly a million people earlier this year Syria has more internally displaced people than any other

country. Over 2.7 million are in Idlib & other parts of NW Syria (https://t.co/XTUUQC1nBC)

Additionally, contextualizing by drawing comparisons informs audiences about the importance given to refugee-oriented topics vis-à-vis others, as the following tweet by the Norwegian Refugee Council, coupled with a plea, exemplifies:

> RT @NRC_Egeland This week marks 6 months since the pandemic & our obsession with statistics: No. infected: 29,107,971 No. refugees who've lost livelihoods: unknown No. refugees unable to access healthcare: unknown No. refugees unable to access aid: unknown We mustnt forget world's vulnerable

On other occasions, quantitative data are used to inform about personal or organizational achievements, such as the number of signatories or sponsors and how many refugees have been helped. Thus, educating others is also frequently used as a self-promotion tool to highlight accomplishments, progress to date, or goals, as the following Twitter messages from UNHCR Canada and the SRC illustrate:

> UNHCR is scaling up efforts to assist displaced families in Africa's Sahel, among more than 700,000 people affected by devastating floods in the region. (https://t.co/BULM80Yl0G; https://t.co/LCXieW7mkd)
>
> RT @AberlourCCT We're delighted to mark the 10-year anniversary of our #ScottishGuardianship Service on Thursday and to celebrate helping 700 asylum-seeking and trafficked young people from 38 countries around the world. @scotrefcouncil (https://t.co/hnBkL92wx4)

Presenting quantitative data, however, is not the only way to educate audiences about refugees. Personal stories and other anecdotal evidence can send powerful messages, too, and often complement messages based on statistics and hard facts in persuading readers to change refugee-oriented views and behaviors. To illustrate, the SRC highlights individual success stories like this one about Hai, a refugee from Vietnam:

> RT @scotrefcouncil Hai didn't know who to trust until he met his guardian. At #ScottishGuardianship he made new friends & was supported through the asylum process. The future's looking bright for the student who recently passed his driving test. Read Hai's story (https://t.co/iR6BvVkG4E; https://t.co/t6ZKRbOyfq)

The second accommodation-oriented strategy, utilizing liaisons, often complements the goal of educating others. Perhaps less surprisingly, accounts

that deploy this strategy heavily utilize Twitter's hashtag and hyperlink features to demonstrate their collaborations with and support from non-refugee stakeholders and to issue calls to action, including donations and other forms of engagement. The following two examples illustrate this pattern, with the first from the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) and the second from journalist and human rights activist Meron Estefanos:

> RT @RefugeesIntl We are excited for the official launch of the @RefugeeAdvcyLab! We co-founded this initiative with @RESCUEorg & @IRAP to help grow the diverse constituency for U.S. leadership on #refugee protection. Learn more about the program now: (https://t.co/sJs1bKHAhi)
>
> RT @Care4Calais Volunteers URGENTLY needed in London – please share. We're getting inundated with requests from refugees in London who have almost nothing – no clothes, shoes or support. If you can help locally, email annie@care4calais.org. Or consider donating: (https://t.co/WTUfsmKlBW; https://t.co/GrPHzznkhw)

It is not uncommon that these two accommodation-oriented strategies, educating others and utilizing liaisons, are combined, as shown by another tweet from IRAP:

> RT @RepCarlaCPiluso This week, I joined 500+ bipartisan elected officials nationwide to encourage the President to #WelcomeRefugees this year. Oregonians know that a welcoming community is a better place for all. These decisions matter. Read the letter & get involved: (https://t.co/k2NQaLn1kV @IRAP https://t.co/FClpJdDiIB)

While the vast majority of tweets from refugee-oriented Twitter accounts resemble the aforementioned examples, a smaller portion of messages are used to exemplify strengths and foster intragroup networking, both of which are geared toward separation in assertive ways, or the creation of separate identities. Oftentimes, refugees' past accomplishments and contributions to society frame such messages. These may be based on individual cases – role models or success stories – but may also be presented in their aggregate forms, as the following excerpts from tweets by Dana Hughes, Deputy Head of Communications for the UN Refugee Agency, and Congresswoman Ilhan Omar exemplify:

> RT @UNHCRUSA Mary Maker is a teacher. A refugee. A role model. Her work as a teacher and an advocate for refugee education continues

> to inspire. Watch her TedxKakuma camp here: (https://t.co/d3O2uY0IAh; https://t.co/4CIbO9ceQj)
>
> RT @brhodes Refugees – from the Holocaust to Vietnam to Somalia – made this country great. Started businesses, enriched communities, made us better. They're much more American than this fascist lightweight.

The former is also an example of an episodic frame (focusing on a specific individual), whereas the latter is an example of a thematic frame (focusing on the collective and the bigger picture) (Iyengar, 1994). Omar's tweet also invokes national identity, juxtaposing refugees' contributions to American society against the Trump administration's efforts to cut refugee resettlement programs. Like Congresswoman Omar in the U.S. context, others talk about how host communities can generally benefit from welcoming refugees, as shown by this quote retweeted by Raouf Mazou, Assistant High Commissioner for Operations at UNHCR:

> RT @noble_sarah More from @Refugees AHC-O @RaoufMazou: "The #UNHCR Clean Energy Challenge is an inclusion accelerator — solutions will benefit both displaced populations and host communities."

Still, others focus on their many accomplishments and contributions to society, science, economy, politics, media, and arts. Thus, those messages are often intertwined with the goal of educating others as they seek to portray the resilience, knowledge, and skills of refugees, as exemplified by this quote from UNHCR's Canadian branch:

> She survived the Rwandan genocide. She endured torture and rape in the DR Congo. She finally fled violence to find a new life in Uganda. Now? Francoise is a determined teacher, leader and #NansenAward regional winner for Africa. (https://t.co/LZVabkTw6R)

In addition, some messaging is used to identify and demonstrate areas in which other refugees and refugee-oriented organizations with similar philosophies and goals can collaborate. Similar to utilizing liaison as a communicative strategy, Twitter lends itself to strategic attempts to network with like-minded others via hashtags and hyperlinks. This strategy is deployed by both organizations and individuals, as these messages from the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees and journalist Max Rosenthal show:

> To all our #Rohingya Refugee Colleagues, consultation is happening today at 3pm Bangkok time and looking forward to your participation @

> NetworkRsn @RYA_Rohingya @rwdn2017 @RWEI_Women @RohingyaWomen @VORohingya @Rohingya111gma1 @rohingya_update @UNHCRAsia @UNHCRgov @UNrefugees (https://t.co/6cLFC4XYDO)
>
> RT @HIASrefugees Are you or someone in your family a refugee or asylum seeker who has served in the U.S. military? HIAS is looking to tell your story. Please email veterans@hias.org to participate. Thank you for your service. #Veterans #Refugees #AsylumSeekers (https://t.co/rqE9WxvUiK)

Lastly, at times commonalities between refugees and non-refugees are emphasized, thereby deploying a non-assertive, assimilation-oriented strategy. While this may be an effective means for highlighting similarities and fostering an overarching (e.g., national) identity, it may also run the risk of downplaying or ignoring important differences that shape unique refugee experiences and identities. This tweet by U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy, retweeted by Bill Frelick, Director of the Refugee and Migrant Rights Division at Human Rights Watch, shares the narrative of the United States as a nation of immigrants and refugees:

> RT @SenatorLeahy Consulting w/ Congress on refugee admissions isn't a suggestion, IT'S THE LAW. This illegal move is part of the Trump admin's systematic effort to strangle America's refugee program. But we will overcome. No single admin can erase who we are: a nation of immigrants & refugees. (https://t.co/ElLkmHMTEP)

Similarly, the UNHCR Philippines division retweeted a message from the UN that points to the coronavirus pandemic as a shared experience and mutual challenge and encapsulates this strategy as follows:

> RT @UN #COVID19 has reminded us that we are all interconnected and need to work together to overcome global challenges. On Monday's #PeaceDay & every day, join us in spreading compassion, kindness & hope in the face of the #coronavirus pandemic. (https://t.co/5o8H3fWN5z; https://t.co/TuIT0Aol6j)

Many of the above examples also show how different communicative strategies can be deployed simultaneously. In fact, more than half (53%, N = 307) of all tweets utilize at least two strategies.

Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this study was to understand how refugees and refugee organizations use Twitter, an open social media platform that allows refugees the option to self-disclose their status and the opportunity to engage directly

with non-refugees and journalists writing about refugees. Results show that many of top "verified" refugee accounts are United States-based journalists themselves. In contrast, organizations tended to be internationally based and tweet more often about refugees. However, both individual and organizational refugee accounts favored similar communication strategies when tweeting about refugees, and these strategies are consistent with what Orbe (1998) described as "assertive accommodation."

Verified Twitter accounts are overrepresented with famous public individuals, including journalists and governmental organizations, with some notable observations. First, Mukhtar M. Ibrahim (@mukhtaryare) was the only journalist covering refugees explicitly. Second, accounts associated with the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency (@Refugees), are overrepresented, and there is only one resettlement host-based organization, the SRC (@scotrefcouncil) of Glasgow, Scotland. Compared to other countries, Scotland receives fewer refugees – around 3,500 Syrian refugees between 2014 and 2020, 16.3% of the roughly 21,100 refugees who arrived in the UK as a whole during the same period (the *Herald*, 2020). While overall refugee resettlement in 2020 decreased due to the global coronavirus pandemic, the United States (where many of the top individual tweeters live) resettled the most (6,740), although it was less than one-third the population it resettled in 2020 (Nebehay, 2021). Future studies might explore why other refugee resettlement NGOs are not more prominent on Twitter and what advantage the SRC has found through its presence.

The primary communication strategy observed across individual and organizational accounts was "educating others." Often tweets described current events such as general announcements by the UN; a fire in the refugee camp in Moria, Greece; or the effects of flooding in Sudan. These tweets and retweets echo the findings of Giaxoglous and Spilioti (2020) that individuals use Twitter to put items into circulation. In their case, they searched a specific hashtag. Here, we see the circulation of news emerge as a strategy comparative to others and without a hashtag. Therefore, it is perhaps less a stance and more a subtle act. When tweets tagged or named other refugee and non-refugee groups, either celebrating their joint work or calling on their support, it was a more deliberate attempt to influence and create activity beneficial to refugees. It is perhaps notable that this sample failed to produce a single negative or derogatory tweet toward refugees. None of the tweets were even retweeted and denounced, thereby reducing their circulation.

In addition, "utilizing liaison," "intragroup networking," and "exemplifying strengths" also emerged as top themes. Orbe (1998) matches the former three strategies to an assertive-accommodation communication orientation. Such an orientation might mean that some co-cultural members are "overly concerned with dominant group reactions" or their "regard for dominant group rights was not given preference over their own … Instead,

efforts aimed to create a cooperative balance between consideration for both co-cultural and dominant group members" (p. 17). For the purposes of this study, Orbe's framework suggests that refugees and refugee organizations use Twitter to counter mass media portrayals of refugees that are often negative.

Nevertheless, this study includes limitations that may be addressed in future studies. First, even though refugee accounts do try to counter negative mass media portrayals of refugees through their communicative strategies, this study cannot speak to the effectiveness of these strategies on journalists' reporting or Twitter users' cognitions, feelings, and behaviors. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent the 280-character count design of tweets limits the potential strategies available to refugees – and specifically those with unverified accounts. Unverified accounts related to refugees would be a particularly fruitful area for further research using network analysis. Similarly, ethnographic work on refugee advocates' use of open social media platforms could better interrogate the motives individuals and groups have when they choose to engage with content.

In conclusion, this study highlights some practical and theoretical contributions to media and refugee studies. First, it demonstrates how Orbe's co-cultural theory can be applied to a non-dominant group's posts on social media. Second, the study specifically shows refugee-related accounts on Twitter favor an "assertive-accommodation" orientation that is intended to shift dominant narratives. In this case, these shifts primarily concern the placement of refugee news into circulation in such a way that challenges negative portrayals of refugees in mass media.

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6 Journalistic Norms and Their Role in the Perpetuation of Racial Inequities

María E. Len-Ríos

Journalism professionals are loosely governed by norms that guide their professional behaviors. While these norms are fluid, as new technological innovations and economics affect the practice, U.S. journalism, prior to the rise of partisan cable and online news sites, has traditionally embraced its watchdog role (Deuze, 2005; Weaver et al., 2019). This role includes keeping government and businesses accountable, informing the public, analyzing societal problems for the public good, and preserving democracy (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1994; Weaver et al., 2019). In the U.S. context, one of the largest societal problems has been how the country has addressed, or failed to address, the issue of racial inequalities. In the 1968 Kerner Commission Report, the Commission identified the journalistic profession, and its inability to tell the story of Black lives, as one of the contributors to racial strife and civil unrest in the 1960s (de Uriarte, 2003). Why had the U.S. press not covered the stories of Black Americans and addressed racial inequities as *American* problems? The purpose of this chapter is to investigate this question by demonstrating how racial biases are built into the journalism profession at the individual, organizational, and the systemic levels.

Journalists today face difficulties in reporting stories that concern racial and ethnic inequities while also being perceived by U.S. audiences as fair and equitable (Len-Ríos, Neumann, & Kim, 2022). The challenges in reporting on issues connected to race and racism not only involve audience perceptions but also include disagreements among journalists themselves. Presently, this includes contrasting views on *The New York Times*' The 1619 Project, led by journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, which set out to ask readers to consider August 1619, when slaves arrived on American shores, as the founding of the United States (Silverstein, 2020). The dialogue about this project shows that when it comes to racial issues, even journalists do not agree on facts or who gets to determine them (Stelter & Darcy, 2020). Why is this? Some cultural critics would say it is because the United States has never truly reckoned with racial inequities and their causes and that

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White Americans are not prepared to share a common destiny and equal power with non-White Americans. Jake Silverstein (2020), the editor of The 1619 Project, asserts that "it unsettles the prevailing narratives about our past."

As some journalists endeavor to research and assess the history of America's past and look into what and who have contributed to today's inequalities, journalism must also take a look at itself. In 1968, the Kerner Commission identified news as a contributor to racial problems in the United States due to its lack of coverage of racial issues and a paucity of members of racial minorities working in U.S. newsrooms. In fact, the Kerner Commission ("The News Media," 1968, p. 213) observed:

> Along with the country as a whole, the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white men's eyes and a white perspective. That is no longer good enough. The painful process of readjustment that is required of the American news media must begin now. They must make a reality of integration—in both their product and personnel.

For the field of journalism, the present era has brought to the fore thorny issues related to journalistic bias and fairness in presenting the news. One could argue that because the news has traditionally been provided from a White perspective (O'Brien, 2020), any move by mainstream journalists to increase inclusion and equity might be perceived by some as injecting bias into the news process because it is not defaulting to a White perspective. In fact, when topics are politicized, moves toward equity have at times been labeled unpatriotic and anti-American (Thornton & Thornton, 2021). This resistance to equity, or expanding the voices heard from, can be seen throughout various segments of U.S. society. First, race continues to be highly politicized in today's culture, as illustrated by people fighting over NFL players kneeling or sitting during the national anthem (Suggs, 2020), whether teams should even play the national anthem at NBA games (Dixon, 2021), and how history should be taught in schools (George, 2021; Thornton & Thornton, 2021). Racial equity is far from being a new issue, but after the start of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2012 (Lane et al., 2020) and the protests over the killing of George Floyd (Kilgo, 2021b) and countless other young Americans of color, there is mounting pressure that journalists report on, and fairly discuss, issues of race and ethnicity along with other dimensions of difference.

The remainder of this chapter explores how bias and fairness relate to journalistic practices as well as perceptions concerning journalistic accuracy and truth-telling. I explore this by investigating how racial and ethnic bias gets injected into news using multiple levels of analysis:

individual, organizational, and systems. By examining how bias enters the news product, and how this intersects with discussions of increasing racial equity in reporting, scholars can continue to expand and solidify theorizing on journalistic bias, "objectivity," fairness, and racial equity.

Individual-Level Bias in the Journalistic Product

When journalistic bias arises as a topic in everyday conversations or in the research literature, consumers and scholars of journalism usually describe it as a perceived political bias held by the journalist (Jurkowitz et al., 2020). In lay conversations, interlocutors typically presume that journalists' personal beliefs influence how they tell the news story through news selection and framing (Tully et al., 2020). Whether journalists introduce bias in the journalistic product in this way has increasingly become a concern for audiences and journalists alike as the credibility of information (often measured via trustworthiness and fairness perceptions; see Gaziano & McGrath, 1986) has increasingly been questioned by politicians and audiences. In addition, cable television, online news sites, talk radio, social media, and magazines have become more fractured and partisan (Jurkowitz et al., 2020), and journalistic roles have become less concrete (Thomas & Hindman, 2015). Individual bias in the journalist occurs, as it does with all people, through cognitive biases related to human cognitive functioning and psychological processing as well as biases that journalists acquire through socialization based on their environment and unique individual experiences (Christian, 2012). Consequently, it is important to examine how racial and/or ethnic biases may enter journalists' cognitive processes and how socialization in the United States, as it concerns race and ethnicity, colors what gets published in the news.

Journalists are typically taught through formal university education to be fair and balanced in their professional work and are trained to see bias as something to avoid (Brennen, 2000). Even so, not all journalists receive a formal education through journalism programs and thus may not receive such instruction. It is possible that some learn the profession's standards through journalism organizations such as the Society of Professional Journalists, the Online News Association, or the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, among others. Others may arrive at their news positions through specific majors (e.g., English, history, political science, public health), political connections, being a celebrity in a different area (e.g., sports or political experience), or the ability to be bombastic (e.g., some TV or radio personalities). In fact, slightly less than half of U.S. journalists have majored in journalism, and about three-fourths had worked for a campus news outlet (Weaver et al., 2019). Other surveys of Western journalists show that they do not perceive a university education

as a prerequisite to working in journalism; similarly, membership in a professional organization is not necessary to work in the profession (Picard, 2015). Therefore, those working in journalism may not have been socialized in its professional norms or ethical standards.

For those trained in journalism, "objectivity" has been set forth as an aspirational goal, if not a facet of the profession (Mothes, 2017; Robinson & Culver, 2019). This concept of objectivity has been seen by some as normative, an ideal to achieve (Deuze, 2005), involving the use of factual information as well as impartiality through the use of "balance" (Hellmueller et al., 2013; Mothes, 2017). However, this position assumes a "balance" to facts and that the weight of facts does not disproportionally favor one argument over another. For instance, by providing balance in their coverage of racist incidents, journalists may imply that the merits of racism are debatable (Kilgo, 2021a). If bias stems from personal experience, and not necessarily what is unknown or unacknowledged, a journalist is unable to provide balance. Thus, it is important that "(o)bjectivity calls on journalists to know their biases so as to avoid letting those biases taint their work" (Christian, 2012, p. 11). When it comes to issues of race or ethnicity or other prejudicial biases concerning other societal groups, it is not impossible to conceive that some journalists may be unaware of their biases. In fact, it may be that a lack of awareness drives the bias.

As an ideal, objectivity has lost some favor and has been harder to adhere to, particularly in the context of postmodernism and given the increasingly complex and myriad roles journalists play as commentators and news analysts (Thomas & Hindman, 2015; Weaver et al., 2019). In addition, because journalists are increasingly forced to create their own professional brands online and on social media (Picard, 2015), their personal experience also becomes, in some ways, part of their journalistic persona. The lines between the personal and the professional therefore are increasingly blurred, and the environment in which journalists live and operate sometimes becomes part of their stories.

Personal biases are not generally articulated. If they are, however, they often refer to political or policy preferences and not social biases related to race, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, or other forms of discriminatory biases tied to personal identity (Christian, 2012). A less articulated fact, however, is that American mainstream news has been reported from a White perspective (Hoecker, 2021; Mellinger, 2008; O'Brien, 2020). Indeed, the racial and ethnic group in power has dominated the news content and powerful portrayals and what is presented as fair and neutral tends to tell the story from a White, Christian, male, heterosexual, able-bodied experience (Robinson, 2018). A plethora of researchers and journalists have demonstrated this through analyses generally showing how marginalized groups are misrepresented in the media (see Armstrong,

2004; Crenshaw, 1995; Diuguid, 2007; Dixon, 2010; Donvan, 2007; Garza, 2018; Josey et al., 2010; Lamsam & McAuliffe, 2003). Even so, rarely is the fact that journalists' perspectives from growing up with the experience of living as Whites, males or heterosexuals, is problematic for their credibility or as a source of potential bias. Research on journalistic bias tends to focus on political bias (Eveland & Shah, 2003; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Weaver et al., 2019) rather than the long-standing inherent racial bias present in the press as identified by the Kerner Report. Thus, when journalism is produced by individuals who do not reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the country, news organizations reflect the socialization and cultural biases of those who are represented the most, which is referred to by some researchers as the White frame (Lane et al., 2020).

Thus, the individual socialization experiences of those traditionally in power in journalism reflect a White bias that has long been injected into the news product through culture and representation. This complicated socialization bias, which mirrors society and culture, works in tandem with human psychological processing. Individual journalists introduce biases into their journalistic products from their socialization as well as through the cognitive processing they engage in when making news judgments. Cognitive processing of events takes into account one's experiences but is also limited by various physiological and psychological tendencies. Cognitive biases are often unintentional, do not necessarily align with a specific ideology, and thus may influence how journalists produce their work. This is different from the notion of media bias, which is an organizational attribute, "an intentional and purposeful slanting of the news to a specific viewpoint or ideology" (Christian, 2012, p. 22). According to cognitive psychologists, biases can be invoked through the use of heuristics, or mental shortcuts, that do not require deep thinking and represent automaticity, or learned routines, in cognitive processing (Devine & Monteith, 1999). Thus, journalists' heuristic processing may be influenced by their previous experiences and individual backgrounds.

Some of these automatic mental shortcuts include representativeness biases and availability biases (Sternberg, 1999) as well as stereotypes (Fiske, 1993). With representativeness biases, people tend to make judgments about an occurrence of something based on a person's experience, stereotypes, and what is known about a particular population or a category of things (Fiske & Talyor, 2013; Sternberg, 1999). With availability bias, a person brings to mind the most recent incident, occurrence, or example they can remember (Fiske & Taylor, 2013; Sternberg, 1999). These are two ways that biases conceivably enter an individual journalist's news story. To illustrate a representativeness bias, if a journalist is asked to interview a family, the journalist, based on their personal experience,

might automatically think of interviewing a family with opposite gender parents and not consider seeking out a family with same-sex parents. Comparatively, the availability bias might have the journalist think of the last family that they interviewed for a story.

The problem with using these heuristics is that they can be misapplied in context and lead individuals to stereotypical, routine journalistic practices. In addition, if individuals rely too heavily on heuristics, they are limited by their experiences and knowledge. Unfortunately, people are more likely to engage in "lazy" or heuristic thinking than effortful processing unless motivated to do otherwise (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). If experience limits thinking, then bias toward one's experiences is more limited in some ways for those in the majority. Minorities have had to learn to experience and live with the majority, being able to see themselves through others' eyes. This is often referred to as "double-consciousness," a term that is often attributed to W. E. B. Du Bois (Meer, 2019) and which typically refers to the experiences of a person from an oppressed culture. Double-consciousness also has been used to refer to individuals' ability to view other cultures from their perspective while retaining their own cultural perspective (Painter, 2020). Therefore, journalists with multiple cultural experiences could bring with them greater perspectives than might journalists who lacked these experiences.

When we examine bias in the journalistic product, of course, there are multiple individuals, and often hiring more journalists of color is put forth as a solution to the problem of White bias in the news product (Wilson et al., 2003). Before we look to solutions, we must also examine how racial and ethnic bias play a role at other levels of analysis. The next section examines the organizational level.

Bias at the Organizational Level

While journalists can introduce individual-level influences by injecting racial and ethnic bias into the news product, organizational factors are also at play. A look at journalism history demonstrates that from the time of U.S. Reconstruction, journalism was used to justify Southern White claims to power, and, later, Jim Crow–era policies, including segregation, lynching, and virtual enslavement in work camps (Forde, 2021). The South's most prominent newspaper, the *Atlanta Constitution*, created a propaganda model that other Southern states replicated and that laid out a communication strategy to maintain White supremacist economic, political, and social control (Forde, 2021). Too many news organizations reproduced these racist themes and content well into the 1970s as a matter of routine. Documented by newsrooms (Fannin, 2020) and scholars alike, news organizations have conceded their shortcomings. For example,

National Geographic, the *Hartford Courant*, and *Montgomery Advertiser* failed to publish "acts of racial terrorism" (Hoecker, 2021, p. 97), were complicit with the "buying and selling human beings" (p. 94), and "all but ignored people of color" (p. 96). The *Kansas City Star* conducted an internal analysis comparing its content to that of local Black newspapers, noting the gaps in its coverage of Black Kansas Citians as well as its championing of a businessman who contributed to the city's segregation (Fannin, 2020). The fact that mainstream news provided largely a White perspective – racist at worst and complicit at least – should hardly be surprising for those who study journalism history. In the 1950s, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) was led by Southern editors who embraced their confederate past and tolerated members who espoused racist sentiments. It was not until 1965 that ASNE admitted its first Black member (Mellinger, 2008).

Organizational-level factors are primarily tied to economics and professional norms, which also intersect with individual actors. First, in terms of economics, both the news organization's paying audience and the advertisers who pay to reach that audience play critical roles in shaping news content. Second, in terms of newsroom culture, journalistic professional norms tied to a historically White male newsroom culture can affect how the newsroom approaches the topic of race (Mellinger, 2008). Newsroom culture can also be affected by newsroom leadership, the diversity of the newsroom staff, and the racial and ethnic diversity of the audience that the newsroom serves (Elmore, 2007; Robinson & Culver, 2019).

Further, in terms of economics, how news organizations approach their news product and how they cover issues of race and ethnicity are related to their perceptions of their audience and how their audience views them (Wilson et al., 2003). From a marketing perspective, this could relate to the idea of "positioning," or defining how an organization differentiates its product offering in the marketplace relative to other competing products (Ries & Ries, 2002). Some scholars have argued that some forms of journalism, such as magazine journalism, require the news organization to have a voice (Jenkins & Vos, 2019), which positions the reporting to reflect particular angles to their stories. For instance, while boosterism is a voice, city magazines may provide critical coverage of community problems, yet geographically, their tone reflects "a shared stylistic outlook" with "an attitude, persona, style, and position" (Jenkins & Vos, 2019, p. 137). Although this chapter does not examine business models of news organizations, it is important to recognize that market positioning, through audience research and imagining viewers and advertisers (Jenkins & Vos, 2019), influences news content. In addition, while journalism positions itself as public service, that public service has not always focused on

racial and ethnic minority members as a central beneficiary of that goal (Deuze, 2005).

Research on journalists' perception of audience shows that economics drive how news editors choose to "package" their news. While bias in news related to economics is often not perceived as bias but rather as smart business, its typical focus on political and societal elites and portrayals of poverty (Thomas & Hendricks, 2020) illustrates a type of socioeconomic bias. For instance, magazine health journalists were asked by their editors to portray story subjects in ways that reflect the socioeconomic status of their audiences, presumably because readers would want to see people from their own social standing in the magazine's pages (Hinnant & Len-Ríos, 2009). Likewise, advertisers may also like to see story content that makes their products look good. Similarly, each outlet in a larger magazine group has a distinctive voice or editorial position reflected by how they choose to gatekeep or select stories to print in order to reflect the perceived "class" of reader by communicating what is "the best" about their city (Jenkins & Vos, 2019). For instance, staff reported viewing itself as providing opinion and commentary on issues crucial to the community. Importantly, magazines, like many other media outlets, consider their audiences in the content they produce. Thus, if a news outlet excludes ethnic or racial audiences, there is little to no incentive for inclusion of content that is potentially relevant to those audiences from an economic perspective. Also, if editorial staff do not see readers of color as vital for advertisers, then how significant community issues of race and ethnicity are addressed, or addressed at all, are critical questions. Indeed, this was the criticism of journalism lodged by the Kerner Commission decades ago. An obvious question is whether racial issues are covered more effectively by newsrooms that have a larger proportion of minority journalists on staff. Some recent research suggests that minority journalists tend to make a difference only when they work in a community that has a large proportion of a diverse audience (Sui et al., 2018).

At the organizational level, bias is introduced via economic incentives that media organizations have in reaching particular "niche markets"; such incentives motivate them to include some types of individuals, usually of upper-income groups, but not others. Bias enters journalism at the organizational level also through partisan bias. While journalistic norms historically have inculcated the concept of objectivity in the journalistic process, recent research demonstrates that news organizations have taken on a partisan media bias (PMB) to attract audiences (Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021). News consumers appear to accept the idea that news companies tailor their news products based on the perceived partisanship of their viewers (Tully et al., 2020). PMB may be defined as involving two processes—news description bias (selection of word use and focus) and news production

bias (prioritizing certain stories and omitting other stories) (Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021). For instance, the tone of news coverage of protests largely depends on the political leaning of the newspapers. Right-wing newspapers in Israel tend to highlight negative aspects of protests organized by the Social Justice Protest Movement and de-emphasize positive stories. Interestingly, while left-leaning publications tend to have more positive stories on the front page, they also had a majority of the neutral stories and just under half of the negative stories on the front page. Overall, right-wing newspapers had more extreme negative stories and fewer neutral stories (Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021). Similarly, mainstream news sources in the United States, considered by some on the right as "liberal media," tend to use negative descriptors for civil rights protesters (Lane et al., 2020). Indeed, scholars of protest coverage note that the coverage of Black protest movements is more negative than protest coverage of the environment or other issues (Kilgo, 2021b). This suggests that liberal media coverage of Black rights protests is negative and that coverage is amplified in conservative and right-wing news outlets. What is troubling for those who are concerned with misinformation and bias is that companies have decided to exacerbate partisan divides for drumming up audiences for their market positioning (Farhi, 2003).

Along with media economic models focused on news audiences and audience influences on media bias, organizational influences include the makeup of the news organization and who serves in organizational positions of power. Scholars have long identified the lack of racial and gender representation within the ranks of the journalism profession as one form of bias in journalism (Wilson et al., 2003). People produce journalism, and insofar as people hold any viewpoint at all, journalism will be influenced by the people who produce it. This was also acknowledged by the 1968 Kerner Commission Report when it urged newsrooms to hire more Black journalists: "The journalistic profession has been shockingly backward in seeking out, hiring, training, and promoting Negroes" ("The News Media," 1968, p. 211). It was not until 1978 that the ASNE offered membership to a Black editor of a predominantly White newspaper (Mellinger, 2008).

The ASNE, in later years and under new leadership, committed to measuring diversity in the field of journalism (Mellinger, 2008). Its survey of U.S. daily journalists in 1992 revealed that only one in 13 journalists were of racial minority groups, even though in 1990, about a quarter of the population belonged to a racial minority group (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1994). Compared with the figure the Kerner Commission reported in 1968 (i.e., 5%), progress was remarkably slow. The 2019 ASNE voluntary survey showed a four-fold increase from those days with 22% of newsroom staff identified as salaried employees of color (ASNE, 2019), which still is hardly representative of the nation's demographics.

Many problems exist with using hiring as a single remedy. First, it puts the responsibility of fixing the problem on Black journalists and other journalists of color rather than have White journalists do the work to understand, get to know, and work within Black and racially diverse ethnic communities. Second, it assumes that Black representation can effect change. Yet if underrepresentation of people of color on news teams remains a problem at the news organization, how much change can a small number of people effect? Third, it assumes that traditionally marginalized journalists will have sufficient power to affect outcomes. What level of influence will they have in shaping the entirety of the news product? Consider how many other people will influence the news product (editors, sources, graphic designers) to ultimately affect the news' presentation. While increased representation of Black journalists and reporters of underrepresented racial and/or ethnic backgrounds in the profession can be part of the solution to racial bias in journalism, it cannot be the *only* solution (Wenzel, 2021).

Bias at the Systems Level

While sorting out how bias instantiates itself into journalism at the individual, organizational, and systems levels, it should be evident that these levels are all interrelated. Nevertheless, to provide a more focused view of influences at the broader societal level, this section will look at systems and how they perpetuate inequality.

In the United States, institutions were created to systemically discriminate on the basis of racial differences. A look at the highest office, the Presidency, reveals that a woman has never ascended to that position, only one Black man has, and few of varied religions. Inequality permeates government, the judicial system, educational systems, housing systems, financial systems, and so forth. These inequalities are reflected in much of the news because these systems are also intertwined with power. Whites have benefited more from property ownership, financial lending, education, farm subsidies, and government support. As noted in the prior section, because some journalism tends to focus on audiences who can "pay" for journalism, it has been biased toward those who already have financial advantage.

Journalists are trained to have sources in their stories to support the information that they provide. Sources can come in the form of traditional academic sources (e.g., books, journal articles, academic experts), through specialist or expert interviews (e.g., chemists, pharmaceutical company experts), politicians, clergy, law enforcement, sports figures, celebrities, and members of the lay public, among others. Journalists' choice of sources depends on the topic of the story, source relationships, whether the information is localized to the audience, and convenience (Len-Ríos et al., 2009; Morton & Warren, 1992a, 1992b). Underrepresented minorities

appear more often in some types of stories, disproportionately, than in others. For instance, source patterns reveal Black, Hispanic, and Native American sources rarely show up in the news as experts, whereas Asian Americans are more likely to be portrayed as physicians or lawyers, thus reinforcing stereotyped roles (Owens, 2008).

One way in which sources are used to add fairness to the reporting is to provide sources that represent different sides of an issue, and often that is interpreted as "both sides" of an issue related to policy positions. This "both sides of an issue" presentation is referred to as offering audience balance in reporting. However, balancing sourcing does not necessarily lead to better factual reporting because government officials have not always provided the public the truth (Blom, 2019; Gans, 2003). Furthermore, certain sources have greater societal power to dictate the news, such as government and law enforcement officials. While journalists shy away from using unnamed sources, in an effort to fulfill the journalistic responsibility of transparency, this becomes problematic when whistleblowers or less powerful individuals refuse to be interviewed for fear of retribution from powerful others who could affect their employment (Robinson & Culver, 2019). In addition, in offering balance to sources, the question is raised on what to do when one side is spouting anti-Semitic, racist, segregationist, or unscientific, ungrounded views. Why should journalists provide that information to their audiences when it represents inaccurate information? Does that not go against other journalistic goals of informing the public? For example, including comments about Black Lives Matters protests, like "'sowing racial division'; and a 'bad bunch of people grabbing any excuse they can find to go and loot a store'" (pp. 797–798) in stories tends to feed stereotypes and does little to inform the public (Lane et al., 2020).

Thus, when it comes to stories concerning race-related issues, and keeping in mind that in the United States, White supremacy was still being dismantled in the 1960s, the power structures in U.S. society were more likely to give voice to officials who were most often White. Therefore, it was more likely that government, expert, and academic sources were White sources. During that time period as well, those advocating for civil rights were members of society who were not often members of the privileged class. As sources, they were more often likely to appear in the news as disrupters and agitators and less likely to appear as individuals with legitimate grievances (Kilgo et al., 2018; McLeod, 2007). In fact, when it comes to reporting on social protest, literature on the protest reporting paradigm suggests that journalists source officials more readily, and delegitimize protesters by framing them as violent, circus-like, or being unreasonable, with providing little attention to the policy issues at stake (Kilgo et al., 2018; McLeod, 2007). Thus, the "balanced" reporting tends to provide the "they said" and "they said" without getting to the core issues that create the

dissatisfaction and also not offering solutions to address the problems the protesters want addressed. A study of elite newspaper coverage, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, from 2012 to 2016 of the Trayvon Martin trial and the Black Lives Matter movement, found that a majority of the coverage was framed as anti-Black and pro-White and contained racial stereotypes (Lane et al., 2020). Hence, the news media work with governmental systems by portraying people fighting for equal rights as aberrant troublemakers.

Thus, the sources that are deemed credible that journalists use come from a myriad of official and authoritative sources that are themselves the product of racial injustice and come from a legacy of White supremacy that has not yet become equitable. Therefore, news media reflect a society and power structure in which they exist.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to study how journalism has repeatedly failed to equitably address the stories of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Americans and marginalized groups in its coverage. Historical research and documentation demonstrate that journalism resisted integration with non-White groups in society until the 1970s and then began the process at a glacial pace (Mellinger, 2008; "The News Media," 1968). Researchers have documented the impediments at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels that contribute to racial and ethnic biases in news creation and products. American society has been separate and unequal at many levels—and we are still experiencing firsts. What this chapter shows is that incremental change at any individual level will take great effort to move the system.

There are numerous reasons for why it is so difficult to change individual patterns of thinking and behavior, partly because socialization creates learned patterns of behavior and makes it more convenient for individuals to follow those routines. The United States is a society that lionizes convenience. Also, as more journalists experience greater time pressures to produce more stories in less time and fewer journalists work less often in traditional newsrooms (Picard, 2015), thoughtful and deliberate decisions become more difficult. Researchers continue to study technology's role in shaping perceptions of encounters people of color have with government and police systems (Bailey et al., 2021) to better understand its effects, specifically on how to counter implicit biases.

At the organizational level, news organizations are becoming leaner, journalists are doing more freelance work, and media are becoming more partisan so as to position their news products (Farhi, 2003; Picard, 2015). While news products can be positioned to reach a particular demographic,

it does not mean that they cannot be inclusive. If news organizations have research driving their choices (and sometimes they do not), then they might also consider novelty so that readers see new parts of the community. Perhaps more troubling is when the profit motivation of a news organization overtakes its responsibility for public service and presenting facts. It appears that some partisan news organizations indeed present news in prejudicial ways as a strategy to position their product so it matches audience beliefs, even as it is aware it is not accurate (Baker, 2023). These journalistic endeavors cause harm to society and continue to stoke fears and jealousies by playing on worn and untrue racial tropes. However, newsroom culture and organizations that choose to continue to be exclusionary of the wider America will eventually be serving a shrinking demographic.

The most difficult level of change is at the systemic level. Journalists inform the public about politics, which has an outsized effect on what happens in U.S. society. Government officials typically set the narrative for the goals and planning for the country and society. Thus, whether news organizations effectively play their watchdog role to hold government officials accountable for their actions (Weaver et al., 2019)—including making society more equitable and fair—has an effect on equity at the societal level. Scholars and researchers must continue to document the ways journalism can improve across all these levels to achieve the racial equity goals outlined by the Kerner Commission. Continuing this work to achieve racial equity in journalism plays a crucial role in not only entertaining audiences and informing them about the world but also solving problems and ultimately preserving democracy.

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7 Fashion Meets Religion

The Hijab, Social Media, and Religious Identity in Singapore

Pranav Malhotra, Fashela Jailanee Brewton, and Rich Ling

According to Islamic teachings, the notion of modesty or *haya* is an intrinsic part of the religion and encompasses faith, speech, thought, action, and affection (Boulanouar, 2006). It also influences what Muslims wear and how they wear it. This relationship between modesty and sartorial choices is reflected in discussions surrounding the hijab, which is the head covering or scarf worn by Muslim women to signal their adherence to the principle of modesty (Grine & Saeed, 2017). Scholarship focuses on how the hijab has been redefined by Muslim women on social media platforms like Instagram as they post about experimenting with different styles, often pairing it with clothing and makeup styles influenced by Western fashion trends (Golnaraghi & Daghar, 2017; Hassan & Harun, 2016; Lewis, 2013; Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). Within this body of scholarship, particular attention has been paid to the activities of young *hijabi* (hijab-wearing) social media influencers and fashion bloggers (Beta, 2014; Moors, 2013; Nisa, 2018; Peterson, 2016, 2017). Less is known, however, about how Muslim women using social media are influenced by these online personalities while constructing sartorial representations of their own religious identity. This exploratory study illuminates this relationship in the case of Muslim women in Singapore.

As of 2015, Muslims aged 15 years and above made up 14% of Singapore's population, with women outnumbering men (Department of Statistics, Singapore, 2016). Although Buddhism/Taoism remains the most followed religion, individuals are free to maintain their religious identity as long as their practices do not contradict the government's emphasis on unity and multiculturalism in the city-state (Tan, 2009). Meanwhile, social media penetration in Singapore is nearly 80% (Lee, 2020). Thus, Muslim women in Singapore provide a fruitful study context to examine the relationship between religious identity, social media, and the hijab. The current study investigates this relationship by analyzing focus group discussions with two different age groups who wear the hijab. This approach

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affords us a multi-generational perspective and details how the older group views the more social media–savvy younger group's relationship with the hijab. After all, young women in Singapore often face criticism from older generations who adhere to traditional representations of the hijab (Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). Such criticism is often informed by the belief that modern Western fashion's emphasis on external appearances, consumerism, and constant change stands in opposition to Islam's innate conservatism and focus on tradition (Moors, 2007; Peterson, 2016). Yet, such critiques fail to take into account women's agency and how "they might borrow from the authority of a discourse of consumer choice or of Islam to position themselves as controlling their choices" (Jones, 2010, p. 620). Guided by the concept of embedded agency (Korteweg, 2008), the next section presents scholarship that examines how Muslim women negotiate the relationship between the use of digital media and their religious identity and how this, in turn, shapes the choices they make regarding the hijab and their attire.

Islam, Religious Identity, and Digital Media Use

One way to explicate the relationship between religion and the internet is via the concept of networked religion, which posits that the internet facilitates many changes within religion that reflect the state of today's global networked society (Campbell, 2013). One of these changes is a growing shift toward a more personalized form of religion as individuals gain access to different religious communities and interpretations online. This indicates that the internet facilitates the formation of individualized religious identities. Yet, it is vital to recognize that the construction of religious identity is shaped by both internal conflicts and external pressures (Peek, 2005). By facilitating access to social networks, the internet can also enhance the influence of these external pressures or social forces on religious identity construction (Lövheim, 2013). Popular media often frame the role of the internet in Islamic identity construction as a vehicle for radicalization and extremism, while less attention is paid to the quotidian use of the internet among Muslims and how this shapes religious identity (Tarlo, 2010). For many Muslim women, religious identity is tied to the everyday choices they make regarding what they wear, for "clothes and associated codes of body management, especially women's, remain integral to the experience and staging of faith-based identities" (Lewis, 2010, p. 68). To further outline this claim, the next two subsections focus on scholarly works regarding how the internet mediates this relationship between Muslim women's sartorial choices and religious identity.

Influencers and Online Celebrities

Scholars who examine the role of the internet, and particularly social media in Muslim women's religious identity construction and their choice of attire, often focus on popular hijabi social media influencers and online celebrities. For instance, Islamic lifestyle bloggers on YouTube merge Western standards of beauty and fashion with traditional Islamic ideals like modesty and highlight the newest makeup and fashion trends that hijabis can follow without contravening religious norms (Peterson, 2016). Such bloggers are required to maintain a careful balance between an authentic representation of Islam and the branding and marketing aspects of being an online celebrity (Peterson, 2017). Importantly, these online personalities do not necessarily claim religious authority (Moors, 2013), but they emphasize aesthetics and apply their knowledge of fashion to help their followers adopt a style that is visually appealing but modest.

Similarly, groups like Indonesia's hijabers community, which consists of young hijabi fashion designers and bloggers, strive to promote the idea that hijab-clad women can "have fun, be friendly, and fashionable" (Beta, 2014, p. 380). To do so, they utilize social media platforms like Instagram to redefine the image of young Muslim women, combining a religious symbol like the hijab with consumerist products like clothes and accessories from high-end global fashion brands. Yet, such platforms may also be used to promote a much more conservative interpretation of Islam, with some influencers utilizing them to sell a longer form of the hijab that they encourage their followers to wear (Nisa, 2018). Irrespective of whether a more liberal or conservative form of the religion is promoted, the growing popularity of these online personalities demonstrates the control women increasingly have in the interpretation of Islam online, a space traditionally dominated by men (Lewis, 2013).

However, it is important to note that these online personalities have come under attack from some quarters. Reactions generated by a group of young Muslim Americans who identify as "Mipsterz" (Muslim hipsters) exemplify this condemnation. Mipsterz aimed to debunk the post–9/11 stereotypical image of the "oppressed" Muslim woman by positioning young hijabi models as style icons (Assefa, 2015). For instance, in 2013, a video showing these women engaging in activities like selfie-taking and skateboarding set to rap music went viral (Hafiz, 2017). People denigrated the video as unnecessarily provocative in its myopic attempt to fight one form of stereotype with another (Saeed, 2016). Some suggested that the women were drawing attention to themselves even though wearing the hijab is supposed to represent modesty. Such criticism is also informed by a view that Islam and fashion are opposing forces (Moors, 2007). While Islam is viewed as symbolizing the traditional and sacred, fashion is seen as dynamic and emphasizing outward appearances. Muslim women like these online personalities are criticized for promoting consumerism and fetishizing of material goods at the expense of spiritual commitment (Jones, 2010).

Thus, these personalities are subject to conflicting tensions and negotiate their position within these tensions or "ambivalences" (Peterson, 2016).

The Muslim Woman as Consumer

Although the body of scholarship on these online personalities is growing, less is known about how they may influence Muslim women as they explore how their individual religious identity is represented through their sartorial choices. The internet helps each "hijabista" (hijabi fashionistas) create her unique individual identity or "accent" as it provides her access to information and guidelines regarding how to style the hijab and the clothes to pair it with (Blommaert & Varis, 2015). These accents cut across both traditional Islamic standards and the ideal feminist image associated with Western modernity. Similarly, Muslim women have been found to utilize social media to "construct, appropriate, and remake their own identities" (Golnaraghi & Daghar, 2017, p. 103). These identities may transcend the dichotomy of the stereotypical orientalist representation of Muslim women as oppressed and the traditionalist patriarchal Islamic representation of them shunning any Western influences. Social media may thus function as "the third space" (Bhabha, 1994), allowing these women to construct "hybridized identities" (Golnaraghi & Daghar, 2017). Similarly, within a Southeast Asian context, social media is a space for Muslim women to engage in discussions with their peers and explore, as well as contest, the meaning behind the hijab and how it relates to their religious identity (Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). After all, young "hijabistas" and "hijabsters" (hijabi hipsters) actively utilize social media and communicate "a personal desire to be seen as simultaneously modern and modest, but on their own terms" through their fashion choices (p. 13).

This emphasis on Muslim women actively choosing how their religious identity is represented through their choices regarding the hijab demonstrates the importance of recognizing their agency. Yet, as this literature review illustrates, it is also imperative to acknowledge that this agency does not necessarily represent complete freedom of choice. Instead, it may be shaped by various factors, including the influence of online personalities, dissenting voices that view Islamic fashion as sacrilegious, and an individual's inner religious beliefs. As the next section details, the concept of embedded agency (Korteweg, 2008) is suited to analyzing Muslim women's capacity to act amid such conditions.

Embedded Agency

Within early feminist theorizing on agency, there was a shift from emphasizing victimization and highlighting the dominance of patriarchal power structures to underscoring how women's agency is characterized by resisting these dominant forces (MacLeod, 1992). As Ahearn (2001) contends,

even as it is important to highlight such acts of resistance, equating agency with opposition serves to promote a limited understanding of agency; after all, “oppositional agency is only one of many forms of agency” (p. 115). Within the context of religion, such a conceptualization of agency also obscures how women belonging to gender-traditional religions can be agentic actors (Burke, 2012). To add nuance and extend how agency is viewed, scholars who focus on religion and agency have called for a “focus on the context in which women perceive and enact their religious beliefs” in conceptualizations of agency (p. 127).

Korteweg’s (2008) concept of embedded agency, which has been used to understand how Muslim women enact their religious identity (Prickett, 2015), is an example of a concept that underscores the role of context. In the debate surrounding the introduction of Sharia law in Ontario, Canada, newspaper coverage portrayed agency as active opposition to controlling forces or as women’s choices being informed by the social, cultural, and political forces that intersect with religion (Korteweg, 2008). Drawing upon the latter representation, the concept of embedded agency posits that women’s capacity to act does not necessarily entail active resistance toward forces like religion and may instead be embedded within such forces. Western notions of agency frame the wearing of the hijab as restricting a woman’s free choice, highlighting the conflict between Islamic and Western value systems. The concept of embedded agency transcends these Western-centric ideas and engenders “more nuanced representations of Muslim women as both agentic and religious subjects” (Korteweg, 2008, p. 435). Further, this concept is informed by the discussion on Muslim women’s agency during the Islamic revival in Egypt, according to which women’s seeming acceptance of patriarchal religious beliefs should not result in their agency being discounted (Mahmood, 2001). Instead, their agency can be conceptualized “as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable” (p. 210). This agency is also inextricably linked to an individual’s culture and history.

Therefore, Muslim women’s agency is shaped by broader forces and embedded within “the contexts that inform it” (Korteweg, 2008, p. 450). The concept of embedded agency guides this study’s analysis as Singaporean Muslim women’s choices regarding the hijab and their attire must be viewed within various contexts. These include the social, cultural, and religious forces that surround them, the influence of social media, as well as the critical views of those attached to traditional representations of the hijab (Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). In drawing upon the concept of embedded agency and recognizing the influence of these forces, this study seeks to present a nuanced understanding of the active role these women play in determining how their identity is represented. Therefore, this study answers the following two-part research question: *How do Singaporean*

Muslim women negotiate agency in constructing sartorial representations of their religious identity, and how do social media influence these negotiations?

Method

The data for this study come from two focus group discussions conducted in February 2018 and follow-ups conducted via email and instant messaging in March 2018 with those who participated in these discussions. Participants were recruited through a snowball sampling approach, as the second author reached out to personal contacts who further referred individuals willing to participate in the study. Participants were not provided compensation for this study.

Focus group discussions provide key insights into the way a specific group evaluates an issue (Krueger & Casey, 2014). They can help to reveal significant trends and may confirm ideas based on shared experiences among the participants (Antunovic et al., 2018). This study focused on participants' views regarding the trend of hijabi social media influencers and how this impacts the choices they make regarding the hijab and their attire. The goal was to obtain a holistic picture and nuanced understanding of Muslim women's views on issues concerning religious identity, the influence of social media, and their relationship with the hijab.

These discussions were held with two groups, each comprising six Singaporean hijabis. One group consisted of younger women who were either students of or recently graduated from a local institution of higher education. Participants' ages in this group ranged from 18 to 24 years (Median = 21). The second group, ranging from 26 to 51 years (Median = 48.5), included career professionals. For all participants, pseudonyms have been used in the study to ensure anonymity. Focusing on these two distinct groups provided an opportunity to collect data that reflect different experiences in terms of the extent to which participants actively used social media to follow hijabi social media influencers and the role that social media played in the construction and representation of their identities. Each session took approximately 90 minutes and was held in a room at the educational institution mentioned above. The sessions were conducted by the second author, a Singaporean Muslim woman who does not wear the hijab. The author's shared background with the participants helped them feel at ease and express their views and experiences. The participants were asked about the factors that had influenced them to become a hijabi, the sources of these influences, their views concerning the hijabista-hijabster phenomenon, and the personal and social challenges they faced with the hijab and their sense of self. The line of questioning was meant to elicit the groups' thoughts on issues concerning choice, technology, and the hijab.

The discussions, conducted in a combination of Malay and English, were audio-recorded and transcribed. As some parts of the conversations were in Malay, these were translated into English by the second author, who is fluent in both languages. This material was then coded and classified into different themes in response to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The authors followed the six steps suggested by Braun and Clarke by (1) reading the data multiple times to gain familiarity with the content, (2) taking notes and generating initial themes based on the research question, (3) combining these initial themes into broader themes, (4) reviewing both overarching supra-themes and lower-level themes to ensure that they answer the research question, (5) naming the themes, and (6) choosing suitable exemplars from within the data to represent each theme. Digital spreadsheets were used to organize the data into these themes. In terms of verification, the authors engaged in peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as the first and second authors independently identified themes in the focus group data, before holding a discussion to reach a consensus.

Finally, a month after the focus group discussions, the second author reached out to the participants via email and instant messaging to get their views on a controversial incident involving a hijabi social media influencer. This incident engendered public debate about hijabi influencers and how hijabis should represent their identity. It was important to get the participants' perspective on this as they had discussed these issues during the focus group discussions. Situating these issues within public debate about the controversy adds to the findings as it presents a deeper understanding of the context within which the participants make choices regarding the hijab and their attire. Participants submitted their comments via email or instant messaging; these are presented after the themes from the focus group are outlined.

Focus Group Themes

The focus groups were both similar and different. The young hijabis indicated that they were exploring how they presented their religious identity through their attire, and this involved social media-inspired experimentation, while the older group spoke of the need to pair the hijab with appropriate clothing and behavior in various contexts. Furthermore, both groups revealed that wearing the hijab involved negotiating the tension between commercialism and spiritual commitment, and their comments on the incident involving a famous hijabi influencer revealed that they were aware of when an individual crosses the line while negotiating this tension. These themes are discussed in greater detail below.

The Young Hijabis: Identity and Experimentation

The decision to put on the hijab may be taken at different stages of a woman's life. The participants in the younger focus group had made this

choice at an early age. They listed a myriad of motivations behind taking this step, but there was a sense that for all of these young women, choosing to wear the hijab was tied to the construction and representation of their identity. Nalah (20 years) revealed how each of them went through this process in their own way:

> I may identify as someone who puts on the hijab but that's myself. We all sitting here can define ourselves as hijabis. It will boil down [to] how you think, what the hijab means to you, and how you wear it.

The sense that these young women were still working out these questions was reflected in the fact that there was a thread of tentativeness and possible impermanence in their level of commitment to the hijab. For instance, some of them experimented by wearing it only in certain situations. Fadila (18 years), who was passionate about performing arts, revealed, "When I perform, I don't wear [the hijab], but before rehearsals and all, I wear it."

Experimentation also included styling the hijab in different ways. The young women stated that there were many styles to choose from, including "instant shawls," "the flip," and "the no pin." Some of them also admitted to styling the hijab in such a way that their earrings or a part of their neck or hair was visible. Earrings are usually a type of adornment shunned by traditional hijabis. According to Islamic tenets, the ears are a part of the *awra* (parts of the body that must be kept covered). However, these young women believed that showing off their earrings was acceptable and viewed this as a choice that they were free to make while experimenting with their look. Further, the young participants also revealed that they may pair the hijab with different outfits inspired by modern fashion trends. Thus, as Farah (21 years) remarked, styling the hijab and their attire involved "experimentation and playing around with it."

During this experimentation, the women often turned to social media for inspiration. They followed various hijabi social media influencers and fashion bloggers on platforms like Instagram and YouTube. For instance, Khadijah (22 years) stated that she took styling cues from a hijabi social media influencer with the username "eenahflamingo" as "she looks cute in everything." Further, social media provided these young women access to images of hijabis from other parts of the world. These images depicted multiple ways of styling the hijab, encouraging the participants to experiment. As Sara (24 years) argued,

> In Singapore's context, hijab has been dominated by conservatives, especially from Malaysia and Indonesia. Because if you go to other countries, if you go to Muslim women in the west, in the [sic] South Africa – they have different styles and they are all categorise[d] as hijabis.

Thus, rather than a singular idea of how hijabis present themselves, these young women were exposed to multiple representations on social media, allowing them to draw inspiration from diverse sources. Sara's remarks encapsulated this phenomenon: "I think it is also social media, you hear stories and there is no one monolithic idea [of] how a Muslim woman should look like. It's pluralistic."

These young women also utilized social media to gain spiritual guidance and reassurance during this process of identity construction and experimentation as they connected with supportive young religious leaders on platforms like Instagram. The participants revealed that these leaders were active on social media and promoted an interpretation of Islam that was "soft" and accepting of the young women's experimentation with their look. Sara (24 years) observed that these leaders were different from the ones her mother's generation turned to for guidance: "They would go to more conservative religious leaders – 'oh must cover up properly,' but for us maybe it is more relaxed. There are young religious leaders who understands [sic] fashion and are fashionable themselves." The next section focuses on women closer in age to Sara's mother, as it presents the perspective of the older focus group on how they represent their own religious identity and their younger counterparts' choices regarding the hijab.

The Older Hijabis: Acceptance and Commitment

In contrast to the tentativeness displayed by the younger women, the older participants spoke of their deeply held and principled rationale for deciding to put on the hijab. They revealed how their past doubts and challenges eventually led them to making this commitment. Further, many of them committed to wearing the hijab later in life (between their mid-thirties and early forties). For instance, Siti (47 years) revealed that it took her time because she had to be sure she was doing it for herself and not because of her dominating father: "Because of him, because he likes to force, I didn't wear it even though my heart said, maybe it's time to wear." Rather than experimentation, the older women's comments on wearing the hijab reflected a sense of permanence and commitment. They emphasized that this was an all-or-nothing choice that would engender permanent changes in their lives. As Aida (50 years) remarked, these changes included the spaces they could occupy and the way they behaved in public:

> I think what everyone who wears the hijab needs to know is there is an added responsibility. The moment you don the hijab, you are representing the whole Muslim community, so you have to know that there are places you cannot go, things you cannot do.

Further, social media did not play a major role in influencing how these women styled their look. Rather, as Zara's (50 years) account revealed, their sartorial choices were more often determined by the context and location they found themselves in:

> We have different clothes for different occasion[s]. When I go to [the] mosque, I will bring my *abaya* (loose, full-length over-garment) and cover up whatever I am wearing; even if I am wearing [something] like this. I will wear something on top of this if I am going to the mosque. Because that is somewhat the uniform for the mosque. When you go to work it's like this, when you go out it's like this, each is different.

However, it is important to note that they did not completely shun modern fashion trends. While they did not expose their neck or ear like some of the younger participants, some of them did admit to wearing Western-style blouses and trousers to work. They also revealed that they accessorized by pinning intricate brooches on their hijabs and carrying fancy handbags that matched their outfits.

These women were also accepting of their younger counterparts who made similar sartorial choices. Harza (38 years) remarked that "it is good that they start with covering themselves up," indicating that even if the hijab was styled in a fashionable manner, it represented a positive initial step toward religious commitment. Meanwhile, Dena (26 years), the youngest woman in this group, understood that this was an expression of individuality: "I feel like it is an assertion of their individual identity to wear it however they want, they *pakai* (wear) their boots and their skinny jeans. They don't want to follow whatever roles people set." Thus, the older group's thoughts regarding young Muslim women who experiment with the hijab align with the religious leaders mentioned in the previous section. Further, rather than intergenerational tensions, there were also similarities between the two groups. As the next section details, both groups discussed how they reconciled the spiritual meaning behind what they wore with the seemingly contradictory influence of modern fashion and consumerism.

Conflicting Tensions: Reconciling Religion and Fashion

Participants from both groups speculated whether the hijab had lost its spiritual significance by becoming a commodity packaged and marketed as part of a burgeoning online business. They spoke of how the hijab had become "commercialized" by social media influencers, resulting in people spending extravagantly on branded headscarves. Harza (38 years)

also wondered whether the hijab represented the traditional Islamic virtue of modesty when it was paired with fashionable clothing that made the wearer more conspicuous:

> I feel for some there may be a conflict. The purpose of the hijab is also not to attract attention, but some overdo it. With all the funny style[s] here and there, but it ends up in [a] situation that people are staring at you and you attract attention.

Sara (24 years) even argued that this commercialization had led to some young women putting on the hijab not to signal their religious commitment but to keep up with peers who wore fancy hijabs and posted pictures on Instagram: "A lot of girls do get pressurize[d] when they see it because people pick up … it loses the idea of what covering up is."

Despite these criticisms, as noted before, the younger participants themselves were not averse to following fashion trends popularized on social media. However, they argued that this should not be viewed as them submitting to commercialism at the expense of spiritual commitment. Rather, as Fadila (18 years) stated, each of them had their own personal motivations for following these trends, including trying to feel good about themselves:

> Social media influences us to be stylish with our hijab and all, but I think, in every hijabi, we have our own intention. Yeah, we wear the hijab, but we look up to the social influencers to make ourselves feel good and look good to the community.

The women in the older focus group revealed that they similarly reconciled the conflicting tensions engendered by how they represented their religious identity through their attire. They admitted that in pairing the hijab with fashionable clothing, they needed to strike a balance between their religious commitment to modesty and styling themselves in a way that prevented them from looking *kolot*, a Malay word that translates to "old-fashioned." Aida (50 years) asserted that they did so by recognizing that they did not dress up fashionably to attract attention: "It is fashionable, not because I want people to see me looking good, but because I want to feel good." Further, there was a sense among both groups that despite the increasing influence of modern fashion, their faith always undergirded how they dressed because they wore the hijab. As Farah (21 years) remarked, "You won't call it a hijab if you're not wearing it for God."

Thus, both groups of women described how they needed to reconcile the conflicting tensions that accompanied how they chose to represent their religious identity through their attire. Their comments illustrate that

they exercised their individual agency in making these choices. Further, as Harza (38 years) asserted, each individual was guided by a personal moral compass and was aware of when the balance between these competing tensions was askew and undermined their religious commitment: "I think there is no definite line, it is in your heart. You would know where the line is." However, the next section details a controversial incident, and the women's reaction to it reveals that external circumstances may determine a more clearly defined line that none of them would consider crossing.

The Neelofa Incident: Finding the Line and Social Media Shaming

Approximately a month after the initial focus group discussions, an incident involving the Malaysian celebrity Neelofa ignited a public conversation in both Malaysia and neighboring Singapore regarding the responsibilities that a hijabi must uphold. Neelofa is a hijabi model and actress-turned-entrepreneur who promotes her fashion line on social media. Participants from both our focus groups admitted to buying hijabs from her and following her on social media. In February 2018, Neelofa launched her new "Naelofar Hijab" collection at a nightclub in Kuala Lumpur. Videos of the launch event showing models wearing Naelofar Hijabs dancing in front of men soon went viral on social media (Lund, 2018). The uproar over what was seen as a shockingly offensive appropriation of the hijab reverberated so powerfully that it prompted Malaysia's *mufti*, one of the highest Muslim authority figures in the country, to issue an open letter in which he criticized Neelofa and declared that just because a woman wears the hijab, it does not give her the license to act inappropriately.

Except for Sara (24 years), who was critical of the Mufti because his comments reflected "the pressure Muslim women face and the expectations of how they should behave and dress according to a patriarchal society," participants from both groups agreed with the sentiments expressed in his letter. They stated that wearing the hijab brings with it certain responsibilities that Neelofa had neglected. They argued that her actions were even more egregious because she was a public figure who influenced many young and impressionable Muslim women. According to Farah (21 years), this incident was an example of modern society's accepting attitude toward experimentation with the hijab being taken too far: "I think if you hold on to this for too long, you will abuse the acceptance. Like, yes, it's true we are not perfect. But we should strive to be. Not continue to behave badly just because…" Although participants from the older group were less strident in their criticism, they did remark that the main issue was that this launch was done in the presence of men. For instance, Harza (38 years) contended that "if there were no men, and it was behind closed doors, then maybe it would not have been too bad." Some women from both groups also viewed

the incident cynically and believed that it had only boosted Neelofa's sales by providing her publicity. Zara, who was part of the older group, humorously remarked that "the marketing gurus must learn from her."

Finally, it is important to note that much of the backlash against Neelofa was initiated on social media platforms. In a teaching moment, the Mufti momentarily departed from his criticism of Neelofa in his letter and asserted that this online shaming was uncalled for as it did not reflect the true character of Muslims (Mokhtazar, 2018). Farah (21 years), who was scathing in her condemnation of Neelofa, echoed this view: "Like, if u [sic] want to make someone better, you let them know nicely. Not through humiliation and criticism. The prophet said advise not criticize." In fact, in the initial focus group discussions, some young participants had revealed that they too had dealt with moral policing on social media regarding their attire. These young women stated that although social media could expand their view of how Muslim women construct representations of their religious identity by providing them access to multiple representations from around the world, it could also conversely have a constraining effect by opening them up to criticism and constant reminders from people regarding the lines they must not cross. Sara's (24 years) comments encapsulated this duality:

> It can go either way. It can promote the idea of a choice to wear it the way you want it, but at the same time this *haram* (forbidden by Islamic tenets) *halal* (permitted by Islamic tenets) police comes up and say[s] [we] can see your neck, [we] can see your hair.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines how Singaporean Muslim women negotiate agency in constructing sartorial representations of their religious identity, particularly through how they style the hijab. It also focuses on the role that social media plays in this process. A focus group discussion with young students suggests that they draw inspiration from the diverse representations they see on social media and actively determine how their individual identities or unique "accents" (Blommaert & Varis, 2015) are represented. In constructing these representations, these women continuously experiment with their look, reflecting the fact that they are in the process of exploring what it means to be a young Muslim woman in Singapore. As Peek (2005) notes, "The formation of a religious identity is a dynamic and ongoing process and that religious identity itself is not a static phenomenon" (p. 236). The young women's experimentation involves styling the hijab in different ways and pairing it with outfits inspired by modern fashion trends.

Although this influence of modern fashion may seem at odds with the spiritual significance of their attire, they exercise their agency and reconcile these competing tensions (Peterson, 2016). Instead of submitting to either extreme of this religion-fashion dichotomy, they negotiate a position somewhere along a continuum between these tensions. However, as the Neelofa incident illustrates, this negotiation occurs within certain boundaries that remain immutable. Indeed, the women's capacity to act does not represent complete freedom of choice. Instead, it is shaped by broader social and religious forces, including the influence of social media and religious leadership, demonstrating that these women possess embedded agency (Korteweg, 2008).

Meanwhile, a focus group discussion with older professionals reveals that they too exercise their embedded agency amid such forces. Among other factors, the pressure to avoid being viewed as old-fashioned in a cosmopolitan society like Singapore results in them pairing the hijab with Western-influenced clothes and branded accessories. Here, again, the influence of consumerist Western fashion may seem at odds with the religious commitment associated with the hijab. Yet, like the younger group, these women negotiate their individual position along a continuum between these competing tensions. However, compared to their younger counterparts, the older women's position on this continuum is much more fixed as they possess a more definite sense of how their religious identity is represented through what they wear. Unlike the younger women, they do not experiment with their look or draw much inspiration from social media.

Despite these differences, the older women display an understanding attitude toward their younger counterparts experimenting with how they represent their religious identity. Thus, the intergenerational tensions described by Williams and Kamaludeen (2017) were not observed here. Instead, the older women recognize that even if a young woman's decision to put on the hijab is partially influenced by internet-driven fashion trends, this choice is not completely devoid of spiritual motivations. The young religious authority figures mentioned by the participants also seem to possess a similar outlook. These leaders reaffirm young women's religious commitment and provide them with guidance through social media. This echoes Kluver and Cheong's (2007) observation that religious leaders in Singapore appropriate the internet to spread their message rather than shunning it because of its association with secular modernity. In legitimizing young women's experimentation with fashion and the hijab, these leaders also seemingly promote a more liberal interpretation of Islam, challenging traditional notions of modesty, identity, and style (Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). However, the Neelofa incident serves as a reminder that certain boundaries remain entrenched. Thus, the growing popularity

of these leaders should not be viewed as a sign of a radical transformation within Islam in Singapore.

As with all studies, these findings need to be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, this exploratory study relied on a small sample, the findings of which can provide fodder for researchers wishing to engage in quantitative studies with a larger sample. For instance, how might exposure to content from hijabi social media influencers affect people's views on the hijab? Researchers can also conduct a content analysis of comments on hijabi influencers' social media posts to gauge the level of support and criticism they receive. Second, the study only focuses on financially comfortable women who have unfettered access to technology. Thus, a study with a less homogeneous and larger sample would present the perspective of a diverse range of Muslim women in Singapore. Future research can also focus on other countries, particularly Muslim-majority ones, to examine how contextual factors influence Muslim women's agency regarding the hijab and their attire. Finally, even though there was a broad consensus among the older focus group regarding how they negotiated the tension between religion and fashion and their views on young women's experimentation with the hijab, it is vital to acknowledge the large divergence in the ages of some of the participants in this group.

In sum, this study highlights how Singaporean Muslim women exercise their embedded agency in constructing individualized representations of their religious identity. In doing so, it underscores women's capacity to act within the context of the social and religious forces that shape their lives. Scholars who focus on the relationship between religion and the internet contend that access to information online can result in more personalized forms of religion (Campbell, 2013). Yet, as this study demonstrates, such personalization continues to be shaped by contextual factors.

One such factor is the influence of social media. As young women explore how to construct sartorial representations of their religious identity, they draw inspiration from diverse images of hijabi fashion on social media platforms like Instagram. Yet, employing a technologically deterministic lens and claiming that the young women's experimental and individualized representations are only made possible by social media may be facile. It is important to recognize that the construction of religious identity online is not divorced from social and cultural factors within the offline world (Lövheim, 2013). Further, even the older participants in this study, who are not as influenced by social media, construct such individualized representations of their religious identity as they pair their hijab with fashionable clothing and accessories. Thus, as Campbell (2013) argues,

> What the internet does is make the practices of "pic-n-mix" religiosity mainstream, as the process of mixing multiple sources or forms of

> spiritual self-expression, once done by individuals in private or on the fringes, becomes more accessible and visible to the wider culture. (p. 16)

To be sure, social media do play a critical role in expanding the choices and perspectives of the younger participants in this study. However, the influence of social media is one among many factors that may enhance or even constrain their agency in constructing sartorial representations of their religious identity. Thus, other scholars conducting research on social media and religious identity may find it useful to similarly draw comparisons between different age groups as it can engender more nuanced conclusions regarding the role of social media.

Finally, the analysis presented here demonstrates that in examining Muslim women's choices regarding the hijab and their attire, it is important to move beyond dichotomous conclusions. Rather than submitting to either extreme of a religion-fashion dichotomy, Muslim women may possess embedded agency and exercise it in negotiating a position somewhere along a continuum between these competing tensions. The location and permanence of each woman's position may differ due to various factors, including age and the influence of social media. However, all our participants, regardless of age, indicate that their faith remains a major factor in determining their position. As 18-year-old Fadila remarked, "I guess for all of us, at some point in our life, we start putting a cloth over our head because of God."

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8 Red, Blue, and Green

Examining the Effects of Framing and Source Trust on Partisans' Climate-Change Beliefs

Lindsey Meeks

Climate change is a deeply partisan issue in the United States. Democrats view climate change as substantially more important than Republicans (Jones, 2019), and over time climate change has become a more dominant issue for Democrats. For example, in 1999 and 2009, the issue was not a top-five priority for Democrats, but it shot to the third-most important issue for Democrats in 2019 (Jones, 2019). Consequently, in 2020, climate change produced the widest issue priority gap between presidential nominees Donald Trump's and Joe Biden's supporters in affecting their vote choice: 57 percentage points (Pew Research Center, 2020). To overcome this partisan divide and "generate the level of public engagement required for policy action," Nisbet (2009) argued in favor of "reframing the relevance of climate change in ways that connect to a broad coalition of Americans" (p. 14). One potential way to connect with partisans, especially Republicans, on climate change is to use alternate frames on climate change that tap into issues they care about, thus creating greater frame resonance. According to recent polling, Republicans say the number one priority for the president and Congress should be terrorism, whereas Democrats' priority is healthcare (Jones, 2019). To examine the effectiveness of using alternate frames to affect climate-change beliefs, this study exposes partisan participants to either national-security or public health framing of climate change.

In addition to assessing message content, this study also examines message source—specifically, partisans' trust in the source. A long line of attitudinal research has shown that trust is an antecedent to persuasion (see Soh et al., 2007), and persuasion is key to attitude formation and change, as well as behavioral change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996), which can include behaviors such as enacting pro-environmental behaviors. Previous research on climate-change framing has primarily examined the effects of messages delivered via news articles or essays (e.g., Kotcher et al., 2018; Maibach et al., 2010; McCright et al., 2016; Myers et al., 2012). Relatively little work has examined the effects of another important source of

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political issue information: politicians. Noting this, Bolsen et al. (2019) varied the source and found significant differences across the effectiveness of national-security and environmental framing. However, their study did not directly assess participants' trust in the source. The current study directly examines perceptions of source trust and combines these perceptions with different frames to examine the interactive effects of receiving a potentially issue salient message from a trusted source for partisans and their climate-change beliefs.

Framing Climate Change

To explore the effects of different climate-change messages, this study incorporates scholarship on framing and frame resonance. According to Entman (1993), framing raises the saliency of certain parts of a perceived reality via "the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). For example, a candidate could utilize a morality and ethics frame on climate change. Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg used this frame via the inclusion of "moral responsibility" in 2020 when he tweeted, "We have a moral responsibility to limit contaminants in our water, invest in detection tech & expand enforcement of environmental protections." Alternately, 2020 Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris directed attention toward the effects of climate change on women when she said,

> As the damaging effects of climate change increase, women and girls globally will feel the greatest burden with higher conditions of poverty, insecurity, and displacement. Our fight for a solution is for all of us and especially the most vulnerable among us.

Whether a source invokes ethics or gender, communicators' framing goals are the same: to have message receivers think about the issue at hand in terms and contexts congruent with their frame's intent, thus creating a framing effect (Druckman, 2001).

One way to increase a frame's influence is to increase its resonance. According to Gamson (1992), culturally resonant frames tap into schemas widely used by individuals to process information. By appealing to broad cultural values and shared identity, these frames "appear natural and familiar," thus easing adoption, which makes them harder to counter or resist (Gamson, 1992, p. 135). Snow and Benford (1988) focused on framing within social movements and posited that when frame resonance is high—meaning there is alignment between a movement's values and a

constituent's—movements are more efficacious. In particular, Snow and Benford (1988) argued that a frame's appeal varies depending on whether the frame is "relevant to or resonates within [one's] life world" (p. 205). Germane to the current study, if a candidate invokes resonant frames that are relevant to a constituent's life world, then that should increase the odds of a successful framing effect.

This study posits that if a candidate frames climate change in a way that partisans deem highly salient to their life world, those messages will be more resonant and thus more efficacious. Specifically, this study focuses on frames that stress either a health or a national-security aspect of climate change for two reasons. First, as previously noted, partisans value these issues. Republicans are most concerned about national security, and Democrats place their highest priority on health (Jones, 2019). Logically, then, these issues should be relevant to and resonant with partisans' life worlds. Further, as of 2019, when data were collected for this study, national-security issues, like terrorism and the military, are not in Democrats' top-five most important issues, and healthcare is not in Republicans' top five (Jones, 2019). This sharp divide in prioritization should, then, produce different framing effects for partisans, such that a health frame will be, for example, significantly more effective for Democrats than Republicans. In addition, even though Republicans tend to be less concerned about climate change, appealing to their national-security interests could overcome this hurdle and potentially spur more pro-environmental outcomes.

Second, previous research has shown that these frames can be effective. For example, Maibach et al. (2010) found that emphasizing health benefits spurred support for mitigation-related policy actions. Further, Kotcher et al. (2018) found that compared to a control group, those exposed to messaging regarding the health implications of global warming expressed more worry about global warming and greater perceptions of personal harm from global warming. Notably, Kotcher et al. (2018) found greater effects for Republicans on some variables. However, their study only included health framing as compared to no framing and did not test comparatively how another frame, such as national security, may differentially influence Republicans' beliefs. That said, it is still important to note that providing an alternate frame on climate change was effective with Republicans despite their general lower prioritization of climate change, which supports the notion that framing can influence climate-change beliefs. Such influence was found in Bolson et al.'s (2019) study, which showed that when Republicans were exposed to a national-security message from a Republican leader, they were less likely to view climate change as a hoax. Finally, Myers et al. (2012) found that health frames elicited more hope than environment or national-security frames, which is important because hope, as well as efficacy, is strongly related with a willingness to engage

in pro-environmental behaviors, political participation, policy support, and interpersonal discussion (Leiserowitz et al., 2018; Myers et al., 2012; Ojala, 2015). Notably, Myers et al. (2012) also found that national-security frames prompted the most anger. While Myers et al. (2012) caution that anger can prompt message resistance, they also cite several studies that have alternately shown that spurring anger can increase information seeking, policy support, saliency, and behavioral action. Therefore national-security frames can produce beneficial outcomes.

A health frame can emphasize how the presence or absence of mitigation tactics can affect health conditions or outcomes. For example, a health frame could focus on how reducing air pollution could decrease respiratory problems and suggest mitigation tactics such as making cities more walkable or increasing public transportation (Maibach et al., 2010; Myers et al., 2012; Nisbet, 2009). A national-security frame can emphasize improving military readiness, reducing fossil-fuel dependency from hostile countries, and reducing environmental pressures that can prompt international conflict, which lead to the use of military resources (McCright et al., 2016; Myers et al., 2012). Both these frames prompt citizens to consider climate change in alternate ways. To test the effects of these frames among partisans, this study predicts the following:

> **H1:** When Democrats are exposed to the health frame, it prompts higher levels of climate-change political participation, behaviors, salience, hope, and efficacy than exposure to the national-security frame (H1a) or no frame (H1b).
>
> **H2:** When Republicans are exposed to the national-security frame, it prompts higher levels of climate-change political participation, behaviors, salience, hope, and efficacy than exposure to the health frame (H2a) or no frame (H2b).

Trusting Candidates as a Message Source

This study specifically examines how political candidates' framing tactics, and trust in these candidates, could affect partisans' climate-change beliefs. Electoral campaigns "involve intense exchanges of political information" (Nadeau et al., 2008, p. 229), and how candidates talk about an issue like climate change can elevate that issue for voters (Hayes, 2008) and increase voters' knowledge about the issue and affect how they vote (Jamieson et al., 2000). Consequently, Nadeau et al. (2008) argue, "Political parties and leaders have powerful incentives to inform voters about their positions on the issues of the day" (p. 229). These messages are then picked up and relayed by the news media (Nadeau et al., 2008), which enables further frame repetition and information diffusion. Such diffusion

is notable because frame repetition can make frames more powerful and accessible (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 2003). Collectively, then, it is important to examine candidates as message sources.

Though candidates as a message source can help boost issue salience and knowledge, it is also possible they could suppress frame reception. As noted previously, trust is an antecedent to persuasion. Trust in elected officials, however, is relatively low. According to Rainie et al. (2019), Americans are more trusting of every other leader or institution measured than elected officials to act in the best interests of the public. For example, 83% of Americans trust the military and scientists, but only 37% trust elected officials (Rainie et al., 2019). And this lack of trust is mutual across the aisle, with 37% of Republicans and 36% of Democrats trusting elected officials (Rainie et al., 2019). A lack of trust may inhibit the persuasive effects of the climate-change messages in this study.

In addition, receiving a frame from a political candidate on a polarizing issue like climate change could also affect message reception. Some scholars suggest that when climate change becomes too partisan, it can prompt apathy or polarization (see Nisbet, 2009). When a candidate seeking office in America's two-party system brings up an issue, it is instantly put into a political and partisan context, and that can have differing effects on voters. For example, because Republicans tend to dispute the urgency and validity of climate-change science more so than Democrats and Independents (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009), hearing climate-change frames from a politician may prime their partisan identity and perspectives that the issue is "too partisan," which could increase message resistance. Alternately, being exposed to an issue-salient framing of climate change, such as a national-security frame for Republicans, could increase frame resonance. Such resonance may, in turn, increase if the receiver trusts the message source. Collectively, these various elements suggest that messages coming from candidates may positively or negatively affect climate-change outcome variables, prompting the need to examine framing effects from candidates. To do so, the following research question asks:

> **RQ:** How does partisans' trust in the candidate interact with the frames and affect levels of climate-change political participation, behaviors, salience, hope, and efficacy?

Methods

An online experiment via Qualtrics was conducted, and participants were exposed to a candidate's campaign speech emphasizing either a health or a national-security frame. Another group of participants were randomly assigned to a control group and did not see a speech.

Participants

The sample consisted of participants obtained via a Qualtrics participant pool. Data were collected in early fall 2019. The sample of completed questionnaires from participants who identified as Republican or Democrat included 342 participants. Half of the sample identified as women, and the average age was 46.19 (*SD* = 17.005). The sample was mostly White (78.9%), followed by Black or African American (12.6%); Asian or Asian American (4.4%); Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino/a/x (3.5%); American Indian (2.3%); Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (.9%); and Middle Eastern (.6%); participants could select multiple racial or ethnic categories. The sample predominantly lived in the U.S. South (37.1%), followed by West (23.4%), Midwest (22.8%), and Northeast (16.7%). The majority of the sample (57.9%) had an associate's degree or higher. More of the sample identified as strong or lean Democrat (53.8%) than strong or lean Republican (46.2%). Political ideology was measured on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 = extremely conservative and 7 = extremely liberal; the average was 3.46 (*SD* = 1.750).

Procedure

After being randomly assigned, participants in the framing conditions were instructed that they would read a speech from a candidate running for the U.S. House of Representatives and then answer questions on the candidate's speech. The U.S. House of Representatives was selected because hundreds of candidates run for these positions every election, and it is unlikely that participants would know all the candidates and be able to spot that this was a hypothetical candidate. To focus the potential effects on the frames and general trust in the source, and not party cues, the candidate did not mention their party affiliation.

Participants then read a short speech by the candidate emphasizing either a health or a national-security frame. To construct the different frames, this study focused on messages that previous studies found effective. First, some studies have broken down stimuli on a sentence-by-sentence basis to show which ones are most effective in spurring climate-change engagement and attitudes (Maibach et al. 2010; Myers et al., 2012), including the following:

> Redesigning our cities and towns to make it easier and safer to travel by foot, bicycle and public transportation will reduce the number of cars on the road, reduce carbon dioxide emissions, reduce traffic injuries and fatalities, and help people become more physically active, lose weight, strengthen their bones, and possibly even to maintain mentally sharp as they age.

The following sentence about national security was also seen as effective: "Improving the energy efficiency of our homes, commercial buildings and factories will strengthen America's economy so that we can afford to keep America's military and national security strong." These sentences were incorporated into the stimuli. Second, to create the broader contours of the speeches, messaging content on the applicable frames from other studies was incorporated and slightly modified for this study's stimuli (Bain et al., 2012; Leiserowitz et al., 2018; McCright et al., 2016). See the appendix for the full stimuli. Once participants read the speeches, they were instructed to fill out a questionnaire.[1] Participants in the control group did not see a speech and saw a prompt telling them to answer the following questions on climate change.

Measures

Political participation. The first set of questions measured participants' political participation regarding climate change via an eight-item scale adapted from Feldman and Hart (2015). Participants were asked how likely they would be to engage in the following activities over the next 12 months on a scale from 1 ("very unlikely") to 7 ("very likely"). Five items came directly from Feldman and Hart's (2015) scale and included sample items such as "contact government officials to urge them to take action to reduce climate change." Because individuals are increasingly participating politically via social media, which was absent from the Feldman and Hart scale, this study created three more statements that assessed digital forms of participation, including "post, retweet, or share social media content to raise awareness about reducing climate change." An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted, and all the items loaded as one component, yielding a reliable scale ($\alpha = .952$).

Behaviors. The behaviors scale was adapted from Whitmarsh et al.'s (2011) three-item Green Behavioral Intention scale, which used the same seven-point likelihood scale as above. A sample item included: "I will try to reduce my carbon footprint in the forthcoming month." One additional item was included to assess information-seeking behavior: "I will seek out information about increasing my environment-friendly behavior in the forthcoming month." EFA showed that these items loaded as one component, and this scale was reliable ($\alpha = .929$).

Salience. Issue salience was measured via a single question from the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication (2019) Six Americas survey, measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("extremely important"). The question was "How important is the issue of climate change to you personally?"

Hope. Hopefulness regarding the issue was measured via a two-item scale, adapted from Feldman and Hart (2015). Participants were asked to

Table 8.1 Descriptive statistics and correlations for variables

	M	*SD*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
1 Pol. participation	3.83	1.756					
2 Behaviors	4.82	1.623	.681				
3 Salience	3.61	1.251	.636	.573			
4 Hope	3.08	1.133	.378	.280	.214		
5 Efficacy	4.84	1.384	.457	.514	.535	.273	
6 Trust	3.40	1.203	.584	.541	.551	.339	.509

Note: Criteria 1, 2, 4, and 5 based on seven-point scale and 3 and 6 on five-point scale. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

indicate how much they had felt an emotion regarding climate change, on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very"). The emotions included were "hopeful" and "optimistic" ($r = .795$, $p = .000$).

Efficacy. Perceptions of efficacy were adapted from a six-item scale from Gifford and Comeau (2011). Participants were asked how much they agreed with the following statements on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Sample items included "I can grow my contribution to environmental solutions" and "I can break through the barriers that prevent me from addressing global warming." This scale was reliable with this study's sample ($\alpha = .925$).

Trust. Trust in the candidate was measured via a single-item adapted from Fiske et al. (2002). Participants in either frame condition were asked, "To what extent do you think candidate Thomas portrays being trustworthy," and then provided a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("a great deal"). Descriptive statistics and correlations are provided in Table 8.1.

Prior to analysis, a manipulation check was conducted using issue-competency questions. Participants were asked how capable they thought the candidate was in handling national security and health and registered their response on a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely"). We would expect those exposed to the health frame to perceive the candidate as more competent on this issue than those exposed to the national-security frame and vice versa for national-security competency. These expectations were supported.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted that when Democrats were exposed to the health frame, it would prompt higher levels of climate-change political participation, behaviors, salience, hope, and efficacy than exposure to the national-security frame (H1a) or no frame (H1b). To test H1, multivariate

generalized linear models (GLM) were run. The model assessing the direct effects of the frames was not significant; Wilks' Lambda = .930, $F(10, 330) = 1.214$, $p = .280$, $\eta_p^2 = .035$. There were no direct effects of the frames on Democrats, and H1 was not supported.

The next hypothesis predicted that when Republicans are exposed to the national-security frame, it would prompt higher levels of climate-change political participation, behaviors, salience, hope, and efficacy than exposure to the health frame (H2a) or no frame (H2b). The model was insignificant; Wilks' Lambda = .956, $F(10, 286) = .653$, $p = .768$, $\eta_p^2 = .022$. With no direct effects of the frames on Republicans, H2 was not supported.

The last set of analysis is guided by the lone research question, which sought to examine how partisans' trust in the candidate interacted with the frames to affect levels of climate-change political participation, behaviors, salience, hope, and efficacy. This GLM multivariate analysis was focused on just those exposed to the two frames as the control group was not exposed to the speech and therefore was not asked their level of trust in the candidate. The results for Democrats are presented first, followed by results for Republicans.

The interactive model for frames and trust for Democrats was not significant; Wilks' Lambda = .810, $F(20, 335.929) = 1.104$, $p = .344$, $\eta_p^2 = .051$. However, the model for direct effects of trust was significant for Democrats; Wilks' Lambda = .563, $F(20, 335.929) = 3.181$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .134$. Post-hoc analysis was significant for all outcome variables: political participation, $F(4, 115) = 4.751$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .153$; behaviors, $F(4, 115) = 9.316$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .262$; salience, $F(4, 115) = 8.129$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .236$; hope, $F(4, 115) = 3.510$, $p = .010$, $\eta_p^2 = .118$; efficacy, $F(4, 115) = 6.483$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .198$.

Political participation was measured on a seven-point scale, with higher scores indicating more participation. Means are provided in Table 8.2. Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of political participation than all lower trust levels: "quite a bit" (*MD* = .923, $p = .008$); "somewhat" (*MD* = 1.385, $p = .000$); "very little" (*MD* = 1.685, $p = .007$); "not at all" (*MD* = 1.872, $p = .018$).

Table 8.2 Mean effects for Democrats of candidate trust on climate-change beliefs

	A great deal	*Quite a bit*	*Somewhat*	*Very little*	*Not at all*
Pol. participation	5.25	4.32	3.86	3.56	3.38
Behaviors	6.31	5.17	4.80	4.19	4.31
Salience	4.71	3.99	4.10	3.04	3.75
Hope	3.62	3.00	2.70	2.90	2.34
Efficacy	5.96	5.02	4.94	4.02	4.08

Note: Salience measured on five-point scale; all others on seven-point scale.

Behavioral change was measured on a seven-point scale, with higher scores indicating more green behavioral intent. Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed greater levels of behavioral intent than all lower trust levels: "quite a bit" (MD = 1.140, p = .000); "somewhat" (MD = 1.510, p = .000); "very little" (MD = 2.122, p = .000); "not at all" (MD = 1.997, p = .002). Further, those in the "quite a bit" category were higher than those in "very little" (MD = .982, p = .050).

Salience was measured on a five-point scale, with higher scores indicating greater issue salience. Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of issue salience than all lower trust levels: "quite a bit" (MD = .722, p = .000); "somewhat" (MD = .614, p = .004); "very little" (MD = 1.673, p = .000); "not at all" (MD = .964, p = .025). Further, those in the "quite a bit" category were higher than those in "very little" (MD = .950, p = .005), and those in the "somewhat" category surpassed those in "very little" (MD = 1.058, p = .003).

Hope was measured on a seven-point scale, with higher scores indicating more hope. Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed greater levels of hope than three lower trust levels: "quite a bit" (MD = .619, p = .014); "somewhat" (MD = .919, p = .001); "not at all" (MD = 1.244, p = .030).

Finally, efficacy was measured on a seven-point scale, with higher scores indicating greater efficacy. Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of efficacy than all lower trust levels: "quite a bit" (MD = .910, p = .001); "somewhat" (MD = .996, p = .001); "very little" (MD = 1.914, p = .000); "not at all" (MD = 1.851, p = .04). Further, those in the "quite a bit" category were higher than those in "very little" (MD = 1.003, p = .040), and those in the "somewhat" category surpassed those in "very little" (MD = .918, p = .071).

These data show a general trend across Democrats: Greater trust in the candidate prompted more positive and pro-environmental climate-change beliefs, especially for those who had a great deal of trust in the candidate.

The interactive model for frames and trust for Republicans was not significant; Wilks' Lambda = .8126 $F(20, 325.979) = .968$, $p = .501$, $\eta_p^2 = .047$. The model for direct effects of trust was significant for Republicans; Wilks' Lambda = .425, $F(20, 325.979) = 4.792$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .192$. Post-hoc analysis was significant for all outcome variables: political participation, $F(4, 112) = 25.386$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .499$; behaviors, $F(4, 112) = 9.637$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .274$; salience, $F(4, 112) = 17.813$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .411$; hope, $F(4, 112) = 8.465$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .249$; efficacy, $F(4, 112) = 12.092$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .322$. Means are provided in Table 8.3.

Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of political participation than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (MD = 2.335, p = .000); "very little" (MD = 3.235, p = .000); "not at all"

Table 8.3 Mean effects for Republicans of candidate trust on climate-change beliefs

	A great deal	*Quite a bit*	*Somewhat*	*Very little*	*Not at all*
Pol. participation	5.24	4.52	2.90	2.00	1.53
Behaviors	5.78	5.14	4.26	3.43	3.13
Salience	4.26	4.01	2.81	2.31	1.97
Hope	4.10	3.70	2.94	2.78	2.28
Efficacy	5.96	5.24	4.47	4.03	3.13

Note: Salience measured on five-point scale; all others on seven-point scale.

(*MD* = 3.709, *p* = .000). Similarly, those who had "quite a bit" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of political participation than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = 1.622, *p* = .000); "very little" (*MD* = 2.523, *p* = .000); "not at all" (*MD* = 2.997, *p* = .000). Finally, those who found the candidate "somewhat" trustworthy expressed higher levels of political participation than two lower trust levels: "very little" (*MD* = .901, *p* = .016); "not at all" (*MD* = 1.374, *p* = .000).

Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed greater levels of green behavioral intent than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = 1.519, *p* = .001); "very little" (*MD* = 2.348, *p* = .000); "not at all" (*MD* = 2.647, *p* = .000). Similarly, those who had "quite a bit" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of behavioral intent than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = .886, *p* = .022); "very little" (*MD* = 1.715, *p* = .000); "not at all" (*MD* = 2.013, *p* = .000). Finally, those who found the candidate "somewhat" trustworthy expressed higher levels of behavioral intent than two lower trust levels: "very little" (*MD* = .829, *p* = .048); "not at all" (*MD* = 1.127, *p* = .007).

Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of salience than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = 1.449, *p* = .000); "very little" (*MD* = 1.955, *p* = .000); "not at all" (*MD* = 2.297, *p* = .000). Similarly, those who had "quite a bit" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of behavioral intent than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = 1.197, *p* = .000); "very little" (*MD* = 1.702, *p* = .000); "not at all" (*MD* = 2.044, *p* = .000). Finally, those who found the candidate "somewhat" trustworthy expressed higher levels of hope than two lower trust levels: "very little" (*MD* = .505, *p* = .080); "not at all" (*MD* = .847, *p* = .003).

Those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of hope than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = 1.158, *p* = .000); "very little" (*MD* = 1.320, *p* = .001); "not at all" (*MD* = 1.817, *p* = .000). Similarly, those who had "quite a bit" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of hope than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = .763, *p* = .006); "very little" (*MD* = .925, *p* = .007); "not

at all" (*MD* = 1.422, *p* = .000). Finally, those who found the candidate "somewhat" trustworthy expressed higher levels of hope than those in "not at all" (*MD* = .660, *p* = .025).

Lastly, those who had a "great deal" of trust in the candidate expressed greater levels of efficacy than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = 1.491, *p* = .000); "very little" (*MD* = 1.930, *p* = .000); "not at all" (*MD* = 2.835, *p* = .000). Similarly, those who had "quite a bit" of trust in the candidate expressed higher levels of efficacy than three lower trust levels: "somewhat" (*MD* = .766, *p* = .022); "very little" (*MD* = 1.205, *p* = .004); "not at all" (*MD* = 2.110, *p* = .000). In addition, those who found the candidate "somewhat" trustworthy expressed higher levels of efficacy than those in "not at all" (*MD* = 1.344, *p* = .000). Finally, those who had "very little" trust expressed higher levels of efficacy than those in "not at all" (*MD* = .905, *p* = .038).

Thus, the general trend for Republicans is that greater trust in the candidate prompted more positive and pro-environmental climate-change beliefs, especially for those who had a great deal or quite a bit of trust in the candidate.

Discussion

This study yielded three notable findings at the intersection of candidates' framing tactics, source trust, and climate-change outcome variables, which contribute to climate-change scholarship and have applied value for politicians seeking to inspire climate-change engagement. First, a candidate's framing tactics did not influence climate-change perceptions for Democrats or Republicans. Therefore, according to this study's findings, if candidates want to motivate the public around climate-change issues, health and national-security frames are not highly effective. For Democrats, this lack of effects could be due to a ceiling effect (i.e., Democrats already prioritize climate change and support pro-environmental outcome variables), leaving frames little room to lift any of these already supported measures. The same, however, cannot be said of Republicans. Some work has found a lack of framing effects on environmental issues, such as low-carbon energy policies (Feldman & Hart, 2018) and power-plant emission policies (Hart & Feldman, 2018). These null findings have prompted scholars like Nisbet (2019) to shift their thinking and pull back their support of using framing to find a "magic message," advocating instead to invest in a more holistic approach. That said, research has found that using issue-specific frames on climate change can be effective (Maibach et al., 2010; McCright et al., 2016; Myers et al., 2012). These studies all varied in design, stimuli content, and specific outcome measures, and the current study was not a replication. However, this study used specific messaging tested in Maibach

et al. (2010) and Myers et al. (2012), and this messaging was shown to be effective in their adult samples. One key distinction is that their stimuli were presented as a news article or an essay, whereas the current study delivered the messaging in a candidate's speech. Future work could examine the interaction between message content and message source and what climate-change framing from politicians in general and in electoral contexts is most efficacious.

Second, trust in the candidate had a strong influence on climate-change perceptions. Americans tend to have low trust in elected officials (Rainie et al., 2019), and trust is an antecedent to persuasion (see Soh et al., 2007), and persuasion is key to attitudinal and behavioral change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). Trust in the candidate did not interact with frames. Additional *t*-tests revealed that neither frame had a direct effect on trust levels. Therefore, these frames do not appear to inspire more trust in the message source. Trust had direct, significant effects across all five variables, and the model for Democrats explained 13.4% of variance and 19.2% of variance for Republicans. It appears as though the connection of trust being an antecedent to climate-change persuasion and change is direct and does not rely on this study's framing tactics. Previous work has shown a similar connection: Trust in a politician has been positively associated with support for more and higher carbon taxes and personal carbon allowances in European countries (Hammar & Jagers, 2006; Jagers et al., 2010). Hammar and Jagers (2006) argued that environmental tax support is based on the public trusting politicians to use the revenue judiciously and the belief that politicians think the policy will have the intended effects and is a sound policy decision. The current study did not measure these variables, but this previous work shows that trust in politicians can influence environmental attitudes directly.

Third, trust played a bigger role for Republicans than Democrats. The variance explained by trust for Republicans was much higher across four variables: Trust explained over three times more variance for Republicans (49.9%) than Democrats (15.3%) for political participation, twice as much hope (24.9% versus 11.8%), 17.5% more for issue salience, and over 12% more for efficacy. These results suggest the best way to motivate partisans, especially Republicans, on climate-change matters is to build up candidate or message source trust. Keep in mind that the candidates in the stimuli did not express their partisanship, so trust is not based on the candidate's explicit party affiliation. Participants could be reacting to latent party cues in the stimuli, but again, trust did not interact with frames (e.g., Republicans did not express more trust for the candidate using a national-security frame that Republican candidates may be more likely to use). Therefore, this accumulated trust was based on other cues that were present in both speeches. For example, it is possible that lines such as "provide a better life

for our children and grandchildren" appealed to Republicans' attachment to family values (Taranto, 2017). Further, Diamond (2020) found that for Republican parents, priming their parental identity, as opposed to their partisan identity, increased their concern about climate change and intended pro-climate political behaviors. Therefore, the line about children could have primed their parental identity, though the current study did not collect data on parental status. In addition, though Democrats are usually more likely to use communal language, work has shown that Republican politicians do use communal language, emphasizing building prosperity together, using "our" and "we," and focusing on the shared identity of being Americans (Hart & Lind, 2014). Both stimuli included communal language to make the frames seem more personally relevant and geographically closer as these are seen as effective strategies for climate-change messages (e.g., "*our* community," "*our* nation," "*our* climate," and "*our* prosperity"; Scannell & Gifford, 2013). This language may have appealed to Republicans and inspired more trust.

There are limitations for this study. First, the stimuli did not state the candidates' party affiliation, and in the United States, most candidates are partisan and make their affiliation known, and voters use party as a strong cue in their votes. Now that this study has shed some general light on candidate messages, it would be valuable for future work to examine the role of a candidate's party with this study's design and how it interacts with participants' party and perceived trust. Second, this study's candidate was running for the U.S. House of Representatives, and it is possible that reactions could vary based on level of office. For example, a mayoral candidate could elicit greater feelings of geographic proximity and direct agency for changing that specific community, and this may affect outcome variables. Finally, trust played a strong role for the participants, and the design of this study cannot adequately examine what motivations may be fueling this trust. Future work may include more measures to assess evaluations of trust and/or use Maibach et al. (2010) and Myers et al.'s (2012) approach to have participants rate each segment of the stimuli—in this case, we would have them rate the trustworthiness of each segment—to obtain a more nuanced understanding of what language motivates trust in general and for partisans in the context of climate change.

Demonstrable action to combat climate change requires buy-in from several stakeholders, including politicians and citizens. Politicians have the political power to create and enact legislation, and they also have the power to inform and persuade the public via their influence and visibility. U.S. politicians looking to positively enhance the general public's climate-change attitudes, especially Republicans, can try to build trust via their campaign rhetoric. Because Republicans tend to care less about environmental issues as compared to Democrats (Jones, 2019), it is important

to know what communication resonates with them and build the trust necessary for collective action. Collective buy-in is important because according to Nisbet (2014), "once community members from differing political backgrounds join together to achieve a broadly inspiring goal … then the networks of trust and collaborations formed can be used to move this diverse segment toward cooperation in pursuit of national policy goals" (p. 6). This study illuminates how source trust influences partisans' climate-change attitudes, which could aid bipartisan climate-policy goals.

Note

1 Participants were not allowed to click through until one minute had elapsed.

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9 Solidarity or Seclusion? Portrayals of Intergroup Relations in U.S. News Media

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Events involving Islam and Muslims have become increasingly visible in political discourse and media coverage, yet many people in the United States (U.S.) remain largely disconnected from the Muslim community. Especially since 9/11, U.S. news outlets have extensively focused on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the ramifications of the Arab uprisings in the Middle East, and terrorist attacks in the name of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS), painting a threatening picture of Islam and Muslims. These views are reflected in public opinion about Muslims around the world (Lipka, 2017). In the United States, the public is largely split on questions of compatibility of Islam with democracy and American society (Pew, 2017), and perceptions of Muslim Americans as anti-American are widespread (Pew, 2016). Muslims constitute about 1% of the U.S. population (Mohamed, 2018), which makes it challenging for many non-Muslims to be in direct contact with Muslims: Less than half of Americans personally know a Muslim (Sahgal & Mohamed, 2019). Thus, the lack of direct experience further cements prejudice against Islam and stereotypical views about Muslims.

With so few non-Muslims personally knowing a Muslim – and possibly even fewer having meaningful or ongoing contact with Muslims – media outlets have much potential to frame such relations. This makes it necessary to take a closer empirical look at media portrayals of intergroup relations involving Muslims. Examining such portrayals from an intergroup relations perspective is relevant for a variety of reasons.

First, given increasingly diverse societies in a globalized world, it is essential to analyze whether that diversity, specifically in countries with religious pluralism like the United States, is adequately reflected in contemporary news. National news media have a particularly important role in facilitating a collective identity that incorporates this diversity.

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Second, media messages that focus on intergroup encounters involving religious minorities like Muslims not only represent an important prerequisite of non-Muslims' positive, indirect, mass-mediated contact but also serve as a gateway for seeking more direct contact and thus developing more positive attitudes toward others. Positively framed media portrayals of intergroup encounters can serve as a prejudice- and conflict-reduction tool, especially in the absence of opportunities to engage in direct outgroup contact (Fujioka, 1999).

Third, such depictions may also serve identity-shaping purposes. The interplay of representational and relational elements of intergroup encounters in the news can make social identities more salient. In times of changing demographics, evolving communication technologies, fragmented media environments, and a rise in right-wing authoritarianism worldwide, people tend to retreat to tribalism (Fukuyama, 2018) and exclusionary us-versus-them thinking (Kinder & Kam, 2010), which can outweigh the effects of positive contact and intensify the effects of negative contact.

Mindful of the constraints posed by individual media selection processes (Schieferdecker & Wessler, 2017), experiencing a positive interaction in the news can be a strategic means to satisfy social identity needs, reduce uncertainty, spark interest in learning more about others, and thus improve intergroup relations. The central overarching question that guides this study is therefore *How do the news portray intergroup encounters?* To answer this question, I conduct a quantitative, systematic analysis of newspaper content to assess the broader patterns of portrayals of intergroup encounters involving Muslims.

Literature Review

Forms of Intergroup Contact

Drawing mostly from scholarship in social psychology and increasingly communication research, a plethora of studies have examined the effect of direct, face-to-face intergroup contact on outgroup attitudes, with particular emphasis on prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). For individuals who lack the opportunity to engage in this type of contact, other indirect forms of contact become more relevant. Those may take place as extended, computer-mediated, imagined, or observed forms (for a more detailed overview of different contact forms, see Harwood et al., 2013). One particular form of indirect contact that lends itself to media research is vicarious (or mediated) intergroup contact. Rooted in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001), this contact experience describes a form of mediated interaction in which an individual observes – via media – an ingroup member interacting with an outgroup member (Harwood, 2010; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Given the lack of direct contact opportunities for many people,

mass media and online media can represent the primary – and often only – sources for forming people's impressions of other social groups (Mutz & Goldman, 2010). It is therefore important to examine how the underlying messages, which may allow and facilitate – or discourage – this form of contact, are constructed.

Vicarious Intergroup Contact via Media Portrayals of Intergroup Encounters

The majority of mediated intergroup contact research has focused on media portrayals of *individual* characters as the unit of analysis. This line of research, which often uses a social identity approach as a theoretical framework, has produced rich scholarship that informs intergroup relations literature in terms of how audiences identify with and process information about outgroup members. For example, this can take place via schemas and mental models (Mastro et al., 2007), forming parasocial friendships with outgroup members (Schiappa et al., 2005), drawing intergroup comparisons (McKinley et al., 2014), or priming beliefs about a particular outgroup (Power et al., 1996). Although media characters rarely act in solitude, their relations with members of other groups are implied rather than made explicit and the focus of scholarly attention. If portrayals of intergroup relations are of interest, then the dyadic level becomes the focal point in content-based media research (Harwood et al., 2013; Park, 2012). This study's focus on vicarious intergroup contact involves interactions that may appear in the form of a dyad, a small group, or a larger community.

Although media content is often used to create and manipulate experimental stimuli, little is known about the extent and ways in which intergroup encounters are *actually* portrayed in the news media. Three essential ways to describe media content about intergroup portrayals guide this analysis: how encounters between Muslims and non-Muslims are (1) *contextualized* (i.e., where audiences typically find them in the news), (2) *differentiated* (i.e., what entity the encounter involves and in which constellation), and how the interactants are (3) *associated* (i.e., what type of intergroup situation is portrayed).

Contextualizing: The News Domains in Which Intergroup Encounters Are Portrayed

The first element that is useful for describing encounters between different social groups is the context in which those social interactions take place. Research linking news values and social identity theory has examined the different news domains in which interactions between groups occur, including politics, science, arts, and education. For example, business and

sports tend to be the most prominent spheres of activity across different geographical settings based on a cross-national analysis of newspaper portrayals of interactions between U.S. citizens and individuals from foreign countries (Rivenburgh, 2000). With regard to the group of interest for this study, Islam and Muslims are typically associated with notions of terrorism, military conflicts, and migration (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Shaw, 2012), thus positioning them in a political, and specifically foreign policy, context. Compared to the portrayal of other religious groups in U.S. newspapers (e.g., Jews and Hindus), Muslims are more often linked to stories about extremism and events in foreign settings (Bleich & van der Veen, 2021). These patterns can be partly explained by the higher news values of these topics, combining negativity and unexpectedness of such events (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006).

Examining news coverage of terrorist attacks on U.S. soil during the 2000s, Islam was frequently cast as a bigger foreign threat, while non-Muslim domestic terrorism is typically downplayed and cast as a minor threat, thus feeding the concept of orientalism and creating a culture of fear around Islam (Powell, 2011). Those news narratives often resemble what Huntington (1996) referred to as a clash of civilizations between "the West" and "the Islamic world" (Abrahamian, 2003). This trend has continued throughout the 2010s, particularly since the self-proclamation of the IS's caliphate whose followers claimed responsibility for many terrorist attacks and atrocities around the globe (Satti, 2015; Zhang & Hellmueller, 2016).

While research on media coverage of Islam and Muslims as an outgroup has seen a proliferation of studies on tone, context, and effects, much less is known about the type of news domains in which intergroup encounters involving Muslims and non-Muslims take place. Developing a deeper understanding of media coverage involving such interactions is therefore critical for a variety of outcomes, most notably public opinion about Muslims. Therefore, defining *where* these interactions occur is a first important step as it provides a broader frame of reference and has implications for potential readership and their news preferences. With this in mind, three related aspects can be examined to help answer the first broad research question:

RQ1: *Where do portrayals of intergroup encounters involving Muslims typically appear in U.S. newspapers?*

RQ1a: *In which news domains can those portrayals typically be found?*

RQ1b: *In which newspaper sections are those portrayals typically placed?*

RQ1c: *To what extent can those portrayals be found on the front page?*

Differentiating: The Entities That Constitute Intergroup Encounters

While Muslim–non-Muslim interactions may be portrayed in a variety of news contexts, there can also be considerable variation in the portrayals of the different entities that constitute an intergroup encounter. Research on media coverage about Muslims often focuses on groups or individuals. This distinction is important, especially considering the strong focus on terrorism and extremism: Focusing on individuals inevitably involves some form of generalizing and other cognitive processes that help negotiate relationships between predominant stereotypical traits of an outgroup and the traits of individuals who are part of that group (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). In portraying individuals, the media evoke representativeness, stereotypicality, or atypicality (Rothbart et al., 1996).

Such portrayals have implications for how contents are processed. When exposed to individuals as potential representatives of their groups, people tend to pay more attention to those outgroup individuals who confirm the predominant stereotype about that group and less attention to those who are not in line with that group stereotype (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Rojahn & Pettigrew, 1992). In portraying groups, the media may evoke viewers' perceptions of group entitativity, that is, the extent to which a group is *perceived* as a coherent entity (Lickel et al., 2000). Outgroups that are perceived to be strongly entitative tend to be evaluated more threatening than non-entitative groups (Castano et al., 2003). Exposure to media messages that unfavorably represent one's ingroup (such as U.S. Latinx or Hispanics viewing an immigration-critical news story) can harm ingroup entitativity perceptions, serving as a mechanism for distancing oneself from a potentially harmful ingroup characterization (Seate & Mastro, 2015).

Regardless of individuals or groups, focusing on people has certain advantages in media framing. Making people central characters in news stories sends a signal of building empathy and rapport, establishing bonds, and creating sympathy among different social groups (Coe & Neumann, 2011), thus personalizing news content by giving a face to a religion like Islam. Conversely, it may also help scapegoat and single out individuals or groups. For example, a terrorist attack may be framed as an action committed by a "lone wolf" (Spaaij, 2010) or as part of a collective, organized group activity (Horgan, 2005), with implications for how people view the outgroup associated with that individual.

Another way to portray Muslims is via more abstract entities, such as organizations, institutions, or places of worship. Oftentimes those entities serve as a stand-in for the individuals who created or govern the organization. Public discussions involving Islamic institutions, for example, about the "Ground Zero Mosque" (DeFoster, 2015), and events like mosque shootings as in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019 (Rahman,

2020) garnered considerable media attention. Places of worship and other brick-and-mortar institutions are not the only entities for portraying intergroup encounters. In other occasions, even larger entities may be portrayed as representing a belief (Islam) or a group (Muslims) in news narratives, such as the IS, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, or entire Muslim-majority nations.

All those entities may be part of certain intergroup encounters, too. Those may be portrayed as a person–institution interaction (such as the arsonist setting fire at the mosque), an institution–group interaction (such as the IS attacking non-Muslims), or an institution-only interaction (such as the United States fighting against the IS). In sum, referencing organizations may shape news narratives in ways that people-oriented narratives cannot do. Referencing organizations – as opposed to groups – may be a way to portray group entitativity or cohesiveness because organizations may underline shared values or a common heritage and foster a sense of belonging and community. Alternatively, it seems easier to mobilize against a more abstract entity (like the IS) as opposed to a group of people. Similar to people, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with those framing choices.

Perhaps the highest level of abstraction is achieved by invoking the entire belief system or faith. This is not uncommon in political elites' discourse (Coe & Chenoweth, 2015). Similar to organizations, making more abstract references has certain advantages over invoking more specific referents such as people. Specifically, invocations of "Islam" or the "Muslim faith" may be more suitable in combination with less individualistic and more abstract elements of that belief system, including its values, principles, history, rituals, and symbols. Like organizations, invocations of Islam may further amplify group entitativity – with positive or negative implications. For example, notions of "radical Islam" that are frequently heard in political discourse of the far-right help promote and perpetuate Islamophobic narratives in the media (Waikar, 2018), with stronger effects on conservatives who do not differentiate between "radical Islam" and "terrorism" (Hoewe & Bowe, 2021). Although notions like "Islam" or "radical Islam" are abstract and do not explicitly invoke groups, they nonetheless serve as identity sources and are symbolic for the groups and individuals associated with them.

In sum, the language chosen for news narratives that involve acts of terrorism and extremism can create and reinforce group biases and negatively shape public opinion about groups that are frequently associated with these concepts (West & Lloyd, 2017). Seeing and understanding *who* – or what entity – constitutes the intergroup encounter can help audiences identify with that entity and model similar interactions, which may or may not be beneficial to the intergroup relation. Employing Benedict Anderson's

(1991) notion of "imagined communities," it helps media audiences who may represent different social groups and lack direct contact to "imagine" the outgroup's place within that "community" or society. To account for these nuances in media coverage on Islam and Muslims, the next research question asks:

> **RQ2:** *To what extent do news portrayals of intergroup encounters involving Muslims include references to individuals, groups, organizations, and the religion itself?*

Associating the Interactants: The Nature of Intergroup Encounters

Members of different social groups interact with members of other groups for various reasons, are driven by different motivations and interests, and act with varying levels of agency and autonomy. In the most abstract sense, intergroup encounters may be understood in terms of the *actions* taken to pursue certain goals, particularly the ways those goals, or their underlying interests, are managed, negotiated, and depicted in the news. Since a news portrayal of an intergroup encounter only provides a snapshot of a more complex intergroup situation – and, in fact, may often end up as a sound or image bite (Esser, 2008) – it is important to focus on the means to the ends, that is, the intergroup actions of the moment that shape the larger dynamic between those groups. Mindful of the many ways in which goals can be pursued, those actions may be broadly shaped by conflict on the one side or support on the other side of the spectrum.

Intergroup conflict makes a clash of interests, motivations, and goals more visible and helps to draw boundaries between social groups. Conventional "us-versus-them" portrayals represent a familiar theme in intergroup relations research with focus on identity aspects (Huntington, 1996; Kinder & Kam, 2010). In fact, conflict is often the ill for which intergroup contact is seen as a remedy and a generally productive strategy to reduce outgroup prejudice and improve relations between social groups (Harwood, 2017). This, of course, depends on favorable conditions, such as having institutional structures that support these intergroup encounters (Allport, 1954). Long-lasting and often intractable conflicts around the world have been popular study contexts for intergroup relations researchers (e.g., Paluck, 2009; Schieferdecker & Wessler, 2017; Tal-Or & Tsfati, 2016).

When it comes to media content, conflictual actions may be expressed by one group acting against another (e.g., using violence against each other, engaging in illegal activities hurting others, and forming legal protests aimed at others). Such scenarios may also include situations in which one group takes away resources from another group (Rivenburgh, 2000). Analyses of media content in the intergroup contact literature remain

scarce, especially vis-à-vis the plethora of experimental studies that are often designed with intergroup conflict in mind. According to one notable exception that focuses on visual depictions of group differences in conflict settings, outgroup members (e.g., non-U.S. police or military personnel) are portrayed as more explicitly violent than ingroup members (e.g., U.S. soldiers) (Fishman & Marvin, 2003).

Media portrayals involving conflict that primarily serve one's ingroup therefore tend to downplay the suffering of the outgroup while simultaneously emphasizing the ingroup's suffering and victimization and minimizing the harm the ingroup inflicts upon an outgroup (Bilali & Ross, 2012). Similarly, U.S. media coverage of the country's use of drones in conflict zones around the world tends to frame the drone program more favorably (e.g., of strategic value, technologically advanced) while downplaying civilian casualties, compared to non-U.S. news outlets (Sheets et al., 2015; see also Entman, 1991). These patterns, which tend to be more visible in intergroup conflict settings, can be explained by social identity theory, particularly national identity and ethnocentrism. Constrained by the sociocultural context in which journalists normally operate, they tend to be sensitive to such identity needs and pressures when deciding on how to report news about intergroup conflict (Jones & Sheets, 2009; Rivenburgh, 2000).

On the contrary, media portrayals of intergroup encounters may underscore notions of support, compromise, and cooperation, for example, by providing material (e.g., shelter, food, money, and other donations) or intangible resources (e.g., spiritual support, information, services, and teachings). Research on media portrayals of positive intergroup encounters remains relatively scarce, presumably because of the heavy (and often justified) focus on conflict situations. However, a few notable exceptions exist. Based on a systematic analysis of newspaper coverage of inclusionary, pro-immigrant events and activities across more than 50 metropolitan areas, immigrant inclusion can be effective, and immigrant-native boundaries can break down with increasing visibility and political participation of immigrants as well as salience of immigration as an issue (Okamoto & Ebert, 2016).

A similar analysis of immigration news coverage in U.S. states that share a border with Mexico reveals that positive outgroup statements were far less common compared to negative outgroup statements and positive ingroup statements, therefore confirming the linguistic intergroup bias (Dragojevic et al., 2017). However, while this research unearths important insights about language and bias in portraying outgroups in the news, it remains unknown to what extent intergroup encounters are shaped by support and cooperation. Important empirical insights on this aspect are also provided by case studies and content analyses that focus on post-conflict reconciliation discourses (e.g., Golčevski et al., 2013).

Every intergroup situation is also shaped by differences in status – both perceived and real – between the groups involved. This struggle over power, responsibility, and autonomy introduces a second criterion to describe the nature of the intergroup encounter: *agency*. In psychology, the concept of self-agency is central to selfhood. Individuals tend to resist threats to their autonomy because of their motivation to maintain independence, control, and freedom of choice and behavior (Brehm, 1966). People who place emphasis on self-agency also tend to have higher levels of self-efficacy (i.e., the confidence in one's ability to exert control over one's environment and produce desired outcomes; see Bandura, 1982), self-regulation (i.e., the ability to change and direct one's behavior toward desired goals; see Carver & Scheier, 1982), self-determination (i.e., the perception that one's own behaviors are autonomously chosen; see Deci & Ryan, 1985), and a strong belief in free will (Guenther & Alicke, 2013).

Guided by this line of research, agency may, for the purpose of this study, be defined as the capacity to exert one's power and control over one's social environment to affect intergroup outcomes. The distribution of such agency in intergroup relations largely depends on two central, non-static features of social hierarchies: power and status (Fiske et al., 2016). Power describes asymmetrical control over scarce resources, whereas status expresses respect and social prestige (Fiske, 2010). The interaction between status and power in an intergroup context creates psychological and social distance so that groups with greater power and higher status become increasingly distant from low-status and low-power social groups (Magee & Smith, 2013).

In the context of this study, the principal agent, that is, the one who initiates action (or who is mainly responsible for the action), can be a Muslim or a non-Muslim entity. Agency also provides information about the direction of the resource flow. It might be one-sided (i.e., agent-initiated, such as establishing an interfaith dialogue or initiating a protest march) or two-sided (i.e., mutual, reciprocal, without clear agency, such as cooperating in a business opportunity or joining a protest). It is safe to assume that oftentimes diverging or converging interests are inherently two-sided as those interests are negotiated. However, while this is often implied, making the aspect of agency explicit in the media portrayal would further accentuate the nature of the interaction. It is therefore important to take the portrayal of agency in intergroup encounters into account as it has implications for perceptions of power and status of the social groups portrayed. Likewise, effective intergroup encounters, such as intercultural exchange and community intergroup dialogue programs, support mutual understanding, alliance building, and agency regarding social change (DeTurk, 2006). In order to integrate these two features – actions and agency – as a way to

better understand the nature of Muslim–non-Muslim encounters, the next set of research questions is as follows:

> **RQ3a:** *To what extent do portrayals of intergroup encounters involving Muslims include conflict versus support?*
>
> **RQ3b:** *To what extent do these portrayals depict Muslim entities as having agency in these intergroup encounters?*

Method

A systematic quantitative content analysis was conducted to examine the broader trends and patterns of Muslim–non-Muslim encounters in U.S. news media. The following section details three major steps that were taken to analyze the media content: (1) the initial data collection and sampling of news articles, (2) the identification of the units of analysis in those articles, and (3) the manual coding procedure to produce the raw data for subsequent analysis.

Sampling

Two of the nation's leading newspapers were selected for this study: *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Both dailies have maintained a constant position within the U.S. news industry since their founding and are among the top ten newspapers based on weekday circulation, including digital circulation (Barthel, 2021). Being considered the nation's flagship newspapers, leaders of the "prestige press" (Stempel, 1965), and the only two "newspapers of record" in the country (Doctor, 2015), they are one of the most trusted news sources in general (Pew, 2014)[2] and influential in setting the agendas of other news sources, including television and online media (McCombs, 2004). Specifically, *The New York Times* has been a news media proxy for communication and media scholars who analyze longitudinal trends of political phenomena (Bradshaw et al., 2014) or seek to extend scholarship related to agenda-setting (Kiousis, 2004), indexing (Bennett, 1990), or social identity processes between the press and the public (Althaus & Coe, 2011). In addition, scholars of media coverage of Muslims have identified both as prominent dailies that "occasionally print articles that, while maintaining critical investigatory stances, provide informed insights into Muslim societies without pandering to stereotypes" (Karim, 2006, p. 117).

A total of 2,653 news articles, published between January 2015 and March 2019, were retrieved using the Nexis Uni database and later processed using the content analysis software TextQuest (Klein, 2013).[3] TextQuest is a tool that allows users to organize articles or transcripts

(e.g., based on newspaper and time of publication) and isolate references within each text based on a previously developed dictionary. In this case, the dictionary only consisted of the stemmed versions of the terms *Islam* and *Muslim* (using Islam* and Muslim* so that terms like Islam*ic* and Muslim*s* can be found). It is important to note that the news article needed to include both terms instead of just one of the two. This ensured that the article provided a more substantive discussion about Islam and Muslims as opposed to mentioning one of them in passing only. This was decided after an initial close reading of 25 articles that were found based on an either-or search. TextQuest returned referential units that consist of 350 characters on either side of each reference to Islam or Muslims, allowing key-words-in-context coding and therefore leveraging the advantage of blending computer-assisted content analysis with traditional manual coding (e.g., Neumann & Coe, 2014). This amount of text provided sufficient information to fully understand the use of the term in its context, which facilitated subsequent coding.

Identifying the Unit of Analysis

Across the 2,653 articles, TextQuest identified 28,777 referential units with either of the two search terms. On average, there were 10.8 references to Islam or Muslims in each news article. However, not every mention represents a portrayal of an intergroup encounter, the unit of analysis for this study. For the purpose of this study, a portrayal of an intergroup encounter describes a situation in which a member of an explicitly mentioned social group (in this case, Muslims) or an identity source (i.e., Islam) encounters or interacts with at least one other social group. Several intergroup encounters may occur in the same news article. To facilitate the process of identifying the unit of analysis, systematic random samples were drawn from each newspaper. The sample represented roughly 11% (N = 3,176) of the entire corpus of references to Islam and Muslims in articles published between 2015 and 2019. References in the article's title, byline, body, and photo captions were considered.

Although the coding measures described in the next section were developed a priori, the preceding step, that is, how to identify whether the reference actually describes an intergroup encounter in the first place, was shaped by a mix of inductive and deductive approaches. This approach can be useful as it combines the rigor of the scientific method and the innovation that comes with conducting exploratory research (Neuendorf, 2001). In this case, it was deemed necessary given that the focus on the dyad as the unit of analysis has been largely absent from the intergroup literature that employs content analysis. In other words, the focus in the extant literature has been on group portrayals (and therefore representational

aspects such as stereotyping) but not on *inter*group portrayals (and thus relational aspects such as the type of those encounters) (Harwood et al., 2013). Therefore, in contrast to fully deductively informed approaches like abstraction and categorization via predetermined criteria, a close reading of approximately 450 referential units was done in order to define both inclusion and exclusion criteria.[4] The goal was to generate an exhaustive list of potential intergroup encounters that help shape the coding rules for this step of the process.

Coder training took place in summer 2019 and involved one coder practicing with non-study content that was similar to the study content in structure and complexity (as recommended by Lacy et al., 2015). Training continued until the protocol and coder produced reliable data (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .92$, equivalent to 98% agreement, using a random sample of 50 referential units) (Freelon, 2013). The coder then coded the entire sample of referential units ($N = 3{,}176$) to determine whether the content meets the criteria of an intergroup encounter. Of those, the vast majority ($N = 3{,}025$ or 95.2%) of references to Islam and Muslim did *not* involve an intergroup encounter. Only a small portion – roughly every 20th reference ($N = 151$) – depicted an intergroup encounter that met the aforementioned criteria. The content of this smaller subset of the data was then analyzed.

Coding

The third, and final, step of the content analysis involved the actual coding of the units identified in the previous step. This section discusses the coding measures used to describe the units of analysis, including both meta-measures (article features) and unit-specific measures (content features of the intergroup encounter embedded within the article).

Coding Measures: Article Features

In addition to news source (i.e., *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*) and time of publication, the following two aspects of the article portraying the intergroup encounter were coded. Those characteristics were already provided for each article in the Nexis Uni output file.

Article positioning. The article's placement in the newspaper, including the newspaper section (e.g., A-section, B-section), and the page number were coded.

News domain. With this variable, the news context of the article portraying the intergroup encounter that appeared was coded. The categorization predetermined by the newspaper was used, including world or international news, national or domestic news, local or regional, business or finance or economic news, sports, health, science and technology, arts

and media, lifestyle (including food, fashion, and travel), as well as the opinion section (including editorials, letters, and op-eds). The remainder included features and book reviews, among others.

Coding Measures: Content Features

The following aspects were then coded to shed further light on the portrayal of the intergroup encounters involving Muslims and non-Muslims, which are embedded in the news articles. Coding was completed in early 2020 with two other coders who were trained in late 2019. Those coders were not involved in the previous process, that is, they worked with a specific dataset that only consisted of already identified coding units (based on the 151 intergroup portrayals identified earlier). Chance-corrected intercoder reliability, using Krippendorff's α, and the corresponding level of agreement (in percent) are reported for each coding measure (Freelon, 2013). High levels of reliability ($\alpha > .80$) were reached for all measures.

Differentiation – Muslim entity. This variable assessed whether the Muslim entity in the intergroup encounter is portrayed as a single individual (e.g., a Muslim, an Islamic leader), a group of individuals (e.g., followers of Islam, the Muslim community), an organization (e.g., the Islamic Center of Baltimore, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic State, the Islamic Republic of Iran), or an abstract reference to the belief or religion itself (e.g., the Muslim faith, Islamic teachings); $\alpha = .86$ (91% agreement).

Differentiation – non-Muslim entity. Similarly, this variable assessed the other (non-Muslim) entity, using the same coding categories as above. If more than one non-Muslim entity is referenced (e.g., Muslim, Christian, and Jewish worshippers coming together to read and pray), the entity that is mentioned next (in that case the group of Christian worshippers) was coded as the non-Muslim interactant; $\alpha = .80$ (85% agreement).

Association – Conflict. This measure was applied to determine the extent to which conflict, competition, or support shaped the intergroup encounter. Examples of conflictual encounters include attacks carried out by the IS or an Islamophobe's attack against Muslims; examples of support include situations of Muslim–non-Muslim cooperation and help (both one-sided and mutual); examples of competition include those situations that describe rivalries but without conflictual character, such as a sports match that involves a team from a Muslim-majority country. A fourth category was used to code those cases in which conflict or competition or support did not shape the intergroup encounter. In all cases, the specific action, that is, the verb (or gerund) as it was used in the referential unit, was also recorded (e.g., "repress" or "helping"); $\alpha = .82$ (90% agreement).

Association – Agency. This dichotomous (presence/absence) measure gauged whether the Muslim entity is portrayed as having agency over the

intergroup encounter. This includes situations in which the Muslim entity initiates action or causes an intergroup outcome (as opposed to reacting or responding to such causes), such as Muslim leaders carrying out an interfaith event or the IS capturing non-Muslims; $\alpha = .87$ (94% agreement).

Findings

Given how little direct experience most non-Muslim Americans have with Muslims, people necessarily rely on news content to better understand this group. The lion's share of research, however, has focused on news portrayals of *individual* actors. As a result, little is known about news coverage about *dyads* or larger groupings that describe interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims. To fill the void in extant literature and better understand the extent to which intergroup relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are covered in U.S. news media, this study focuses on a type of medium where such constructions have continued potential to shape public opinion: national newspapers.

Locating Portrayals of Intergroup Encounters

To answer the first set of research questions, which ask where portrayals of intergroup encounters are found in U.S. newspapers, the respective *news domain* of each unit (as determined by the news outlet) was first recorded (RQ1a). As Figure 9.1 shows, portrayals of intergroup encounters involving Muslims were primarily embedded in an international (non-U.S.) news context (49%, $N = 74$), followed by national news (18%, $N = 27$), editorials and op-eds (17%, $N = 26$). In contrast, local or regional events (5.3%, $N = 8$), lifestyle and religion (1.3%, $N = 2$), sports (0.7%, $N = 1$), business (1.3%, $N = 2$), and the arts (0.7%, $N = 1$) were rather uncommon news contexts for referencing intergroup encounters involving Muslims.[5] Muslim–non-Muslim encounters were notably absent from news articles in the science, technology, and health domains. This distribution is statistically significant, $\chi^2\,(8) = 269.5$, $p < .001$. Thus, to the extent that intergroup portrayals involving Muslims appear in U.S. newspapers, they appear primarily in foreign locations, which tend to be highly politicized.

Knowing which news domains are more or less likely to portray intergroup encounters between Muslims and non-Muslims is important, but the physical placement of such stories in a newspaper also affects the audience's chances to come across such intergroup portrayals. Given that audience attention is a generally limited resource, stories published on the first few pages typically get more attention than stories that appear in the back half of a paper. To answer RQ1b, which focuses on the *newspaper section* (as opposed to the domain), the different newspaper segments in which

the article that mentions a Muslim–non-Muslim encounter appears were coded. Approximately four in five (81.4%, *N* = 83) portrayals of intergroup encounters can be found in the more prominent A-sections of the different newspapers, and roughly one in nine (11.8%, *N* = 12) can be found in the next segment (B-section). The remainder (6.8%, *N* = 7) is distributed across other sections. This pattern is statistically significant, χ^2 (2) = 106.3, p < .001.[6] Thus, intergroup portrayals involving Muslims can mostly be found in the more prominent A-sections of daily newspapers.

How are portrayals of intergroup encounters distributed across news sections *and* news domains? This pattern is also partly shown in Figure 9.1. The previously identified overall pattern (in response to RQ1a) largely remains the same with respect to the A-section. More than half of all references to intergroup encounters involving Muslims (60.2%, *N* = 50) can be found in the international news section; roughly one in four references (22.9%, *N* = 19) in national news; and one in eight references (12%, *N* = 10) in editorials or op-eds. Local or regional news (2.4%, *N* = 2) and business or finance news (1.2%, *N* = 1) are rarely featured in these more prominent newspaper sections and thus play only a marginal role in portraying Muslim–non-Muslim encounters. This distribution is statistically significant, χ^2 (8) = 202.98, p < .001.

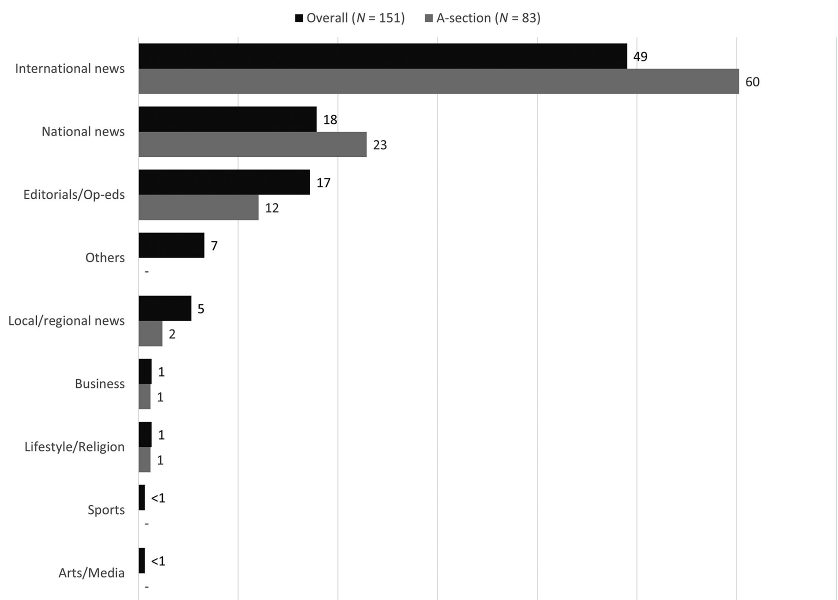

Figure 9.1 Placement of portrayals of intergroup encounters involving Muslims, by newspaper section and news domain, in %.

Clearly, the maximum visibility of intergroup portrayals is obtained by being placed on a newspaper's front page. To answer RQ1c, which asks about the extent to which such portrayals can be found on the front page, I analyzed all references made on page 1 of both newspapers' A-sections. Overall, approximately one in eight portrayals of intergroup encounters (12.7%, N = 13)[7] were featured on front pages across the two newspapers. The type of news content featured on those pages resembles the overall pattern (RQ1a) described earlier: International news dominate (61.5%, N = 8), but every third time a Muslim–non-Muslim encounter is referenced, it is part of a national news story (38.5%, N = 5).[8]

To conclude, intergroup relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are primarily portrayed in the context of international events and, to a lesser degree, national events but can also be found in the newspapers' opinion sections. These findings suggest that non-Muslim readers of national newspapers tend to have vicarious contact experiences involving Muslims in stories they find in those three domains.

Identifying the Entities That Constitute Intergroup Encounters

After examining what news domains and newspaper sections are more common spaces for portraying intergroup encounters involving Muslims, RQ2 asks *what entities* constitute these portrayals. In intergroup communication contexts, it can be expected that the protagonists are *people*. The data indicate that this is indeed the case. Of all Muslim entities referenced as part of an intergroup encounter, roughly three in four references were linked to people (74.8%, N = 113), with groups being more prevalent (56.3%, N = 85) than individuals (18.5%, N = 28) (see Figure 9.2). Roughly one in six portrayals (16.6%, N = 25) referenced a Muslim or Islamic organization, including cultural institutions and places of worship (e.g., "the Islamic Society of Baltimore"), political organizations (e.g., "Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt"), nations (e.g., "the Islamic Republic of Iran"), or pseudo-states, specifically the IS. In contrast, more abstract references to the Muslim faith or Islam as a belief system were fairly rare (8.6%, N = 13). This pattern, as it relates to the portrayal of Muslims as part of intergroup encounters, is statistically significant, χ^2 (3) = 82.19, p < .001.

Among non-Muslim entities, the picture looks similar although more balanced. Like Muslims, portrayals of people dominate. Roughly two in three references (67.5%, N = 102) involve people, with groups having slightly more visibility in news coverage (39.7%, N = 60) than individuals (27.8%, N = 42). In contrast, abstract references to non-Muslim religions (e.g., Christianity and Judaism) were nearly absent from news coverage (2.6%, N = 4), whereas non-Muslim organizations (29.8%, N = 45) were

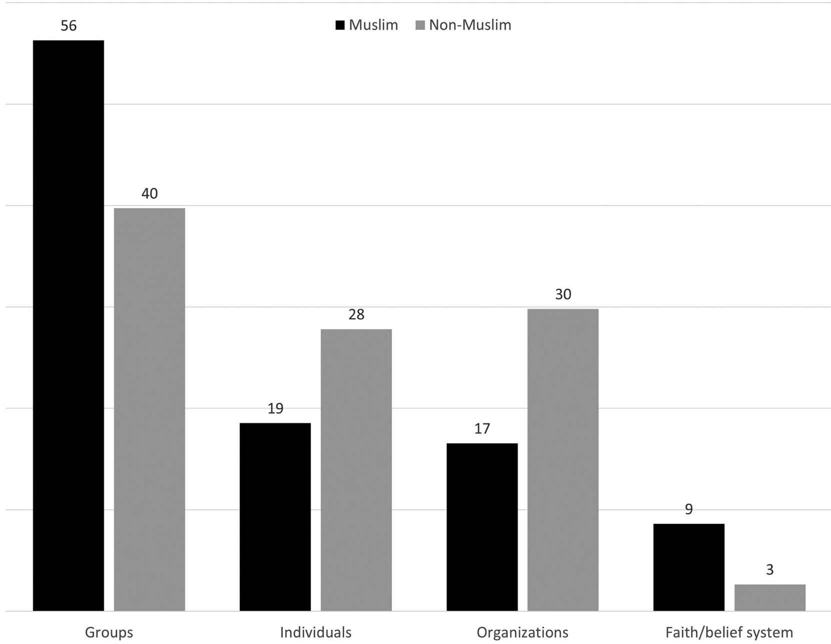

Figure 9.2 Types of entities in portrayals of intergroup encounters, in % (N = 151).

referenced slightly more often than non-Muslim individuals. This pattern among non-Muslim entities is also statistically significant, χ^2 (3) = 45.16, p < .001. In sum, when Muslims are portrayed vis-à-vis non-Muslims, they are predominantly presented as groups, whereas non-Muslims are nearly equally often portrayed as groups, individuals, and organizations.

To shed additional light on these intergroup encounters, it is worth examining the type of constellations of those encounters. As Figure 9.3 shows, the most frequently occurring form is, by far, groups interacting with other groups (26.5% of all references, N = 40), as illustrated by the case of Jewish citizens helping Muslim refugees (*The New York Times*, March 2019). This is followed by Muslim groups interacting with non-Muslim organizations (17.9%, N = 27) and non-Muslim individuals (11.3%, N = 17), as exemplified by China's mass detention of ethnic Uighurs and other Muslim minority groups (*The New York Times*, September 2018) and Pope Francis washing the feet of Muslims during the Holy Thursday Mass (*The New York Times*, April 2017), respectively. These three constellations – group–group, group–individual, and group–organization – constitute more than half of all media portrayals of Muslim–non-Muslim intergroup encounters. The pattern reflected in Figure 9.3 is statistically significant, χ^2 (9) = 24.64, p < .01. Thus, encounters between Muslim and non-Muslim entities are, in

		non-Muslim				
		Individual	Group	Organization	Religion	*Total*
Muslim	Individual	10	3	5	1	*19*
	Group	11	27	18	1	*56*
	Organization	5	7	5	-	*17*
	Religion	3	3	1	1	*9*
	Total	*29*	*39*	*30*	*3*	*100*

Figure 9.3 Types of interactions in portrayals of intergroup encounters, in % (N = 151).

fact, portrayed as groups meeting groups, and to a lesser degree, Muslim groups interacting with non-Muslim organizations and individuals.

Taking a closer look at specific entities that constitute the intergroup encounter, results show that the most common form of interaction for Muslim individuals (N = 28) is with other non-Muslim individuals (53.6%, N = 15) and, to a lesser extent, with organizations (28.6%, N = 8) and groups (14.3%, N = 4). This pattern is statistically significant, χ^2 (3) = 15.71, p < .001. Muslim organizations (N = 25) are equally likely to interact with other non-Muslim organizations (32%, N = 8), groups (40%, N = 10), and individuals (28%, N = 7) but not with non-Muslim religions in a more abstract sense. This pattern is also statistically significant, χ^2 (3) = 9.08, p < .05. Thus, in addition to groups, encounters involving Muslim individuals are the second-most common form of intergroup portrayals; however, the role of organizational actors representing Muslims and Islam is not negligible as these constitute a sizable portion particularly among non-Muslim entities.

Understanding the Nature of Intergroup Encounters

RQ3a asks to what extent portrayals of Muslim–non-Muslim encounters are shaped by conflict, competition, or support. More than two-thirds of all intergroup portrayals (70.1%, $N = 106$) are based on some type of conflict (e.g., attacks and intimidation), while one in four portrays an encounter shaped by support (e.g., cooperation and aid) (25.2%, $N = 38$). Only few cases portrayed a form of competition (e.g., political contest) (1.3%, $N = 2$).[9] This difference is also statistically significant, $\chi^2\,(3) = 185.66$, $p < .001$, indicating a clear tendency to use conflictive scenarios to portray encounters between Muslims and non-Muslims.

While an encounter may depict a situation that is shaped by different degrees of conflict, the role of the entities that constitute that encounter may be different. RQ3b thus focuses on the agency of the Muslim entity in such encounters. Overall, Muslims tend to be portrayed as having no agency in these intergroup portrayals. Roughly two-thirds of all encounters describe Muslims in this way (62.9%, $N = 95$), and about a third of all encounters (37.1%, $N = 56$) portray Muslims with some sort of agency. This difference is statistically significant, $\chi^2\,(1) = 10.07$, $p < .01$, indicating a tendency to portray Muslims without agency in the intergroup encounters of which they are a part. When combining these two characteristics, results show that conflict and agency are independent. There are no statistically significant differences in terms of agency held by Muslim entities when they are part of conflictual or supportive intergroup encounters, $\chi^2\,(1) = .01$, $p = 0.91$. However, considering these four constellations as distinct scenarios provides a more holistic picture.

First, the most common portrayal is one of Muslims having no agency in intergroup encounters that involve conflict (45.8%, $N = 66$). A clear theme emerges from examining those scenarios: These are typically situations in which Muslims are victims of physical attacks or other Islamophobia-motivated acts. For example, several stories deal with the massacre of Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand, by a white nationalist assailant (e.g., *The Washington Post*, March 2019), the internment and mistreatment of ethnic Uighur Muslims by Chinese authorities (e.g., *The New York Times*, December 2018), or the act of a man plowing his van into a crowd of Muslim worshippers in London (e.g., *The New York Times*, June 2017). However, not all stories received this much attention. Less well-known examples of such hate crimes include stories like the mob assault on two Muslim teenagers by villagers in India (*The New York Times*, May 2017).

The second-most common scenario involves conflictual encounters in which the Muslim entity does have agency (27.8%, $N = 40$). These are usually situations in which agency comes in the form of using intentional violence to achieve certain political or religious objectives. Examples include

not only international events such as the killing of Coptic Christians in Egypt by Islamist gunmen (*The New York Times*, November 2018) and the onslaught against religious minorities like the Yazidis in northern Iraq by the IS (*The Washington Post*, February 2015) but also domestic events such as the fatal shooting of two individuals by "a Florida man who had recently converted to Islam" (*The New York Times*, February 2018).

In contrast, less common are situations shaped by support in which Muslim entities do not have agency (16.7%, $N = 24$). Examples include news stories about Muslim refugees being helped by Jewish citizens in Pittsburgh (*The New York Times*, March 2019) or the Muslim community in New Jersey being protected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) after receiving multiple threats against mosques (*The New York Times*, November 2017).

Lastly, the least common way to portray the nature of intergroup encounters relates to support scenarios in which Muslim entities have agency (9.7%, $N = 14$). Examples include news stories about the increase in Muslim cooperation with law enforcement throughout the years (*The Washington Post*, June 2016) or the organization of Muslim-Jewish dinner events around New York City to build interfaith understanding (*The New York Times*, May 2017).

It is evident that this last form of intergroup encounter portrays Islam and Muslim in a considerably more positive light (i.e., as supportive *and* proactive) than the previous scenarios. Specifically, portraying Islam and Muslims as proactively engaging in conflict (i.e., the second scenario described earlier) was more than twice as common as portraying them as proactively supporting non-Muslim others and building rapport and understanding. This distribution is statistically significant, χ^2 (3) = 42.89, $p < .001$.

Discussion

Motivated by the need to better understand intergroup relations involving Muslims, this study examined media portrayals of encounters between Muslims and non-Muslims. Heeding the call of Harwood and colleagues (2013, p. 87), it shifts the focus toward examining portrayals at the dyadic level of analysis as opposed to individual characters as the unit of analysis. Although media content is frequently used to create and manipulate experimental stimuli, relatively little is known about the extent and ways in which intergroup encounters are actually portrayed in the news media. As a form of mediated, indirect intergroup contact, vicarious contact has also shown its effectiveness in past research (Mazziotta et al., 2011; Paluck, 2009).

Despite its low personal involvement (as one simply observes ingroup members interacting with outgroup members), the intergroup experience

can still be rich due to the use of identity cues and news values that shape the portrayal of the intergroup encounter. As Harwood (2010) argues, the more fruitful types of contact may actually be low in richness. Observing intergroup contact via media may serve as a prejudice-reduction strategy. Particularly for individuals who are hesitant, introverted, or anxious of novel situations (like meeting strangers) or who simply do not have the opportunity to meet people from other groups because they live in nondiverse areas or are afraid of alienation from their own social groups, this type of contact has much potential and can be a crucial step toward seeking more meaningful, direct contact. Experiencing vicarious contact facilitates liking of outgroups (via parasocial relationships), identifying with ingroup and outgroup members (via social identification processes), and social learning (via social cognitive processes) (Joyce, 2017).

Several findings from this media content analysis are worth highlighting. First, U.S. news audiences may vicariously experience interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims in just a handful of news domains, with the international news section being the primary source for observing such encounters. Taken together, more than eight in ten portrayals of Muslim–non-Muslim encounters can be found in only three sections: international news, national news, and editorials or op-eds. While it is not surprising that these news domains dominate in national newspapers like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post,* the small fraction of news about intergroup encounters at the local or regional level (about 5% of all references to Muslim–non-Muslim encounters) is nonetheless surprising. However, perhaps most stunning is the virtual absence of those encounters from other news domains: News audiences are rather unlikely to read – and therefore learn – about Muslim–non-Muslim interactions from reading the sports, business, arts, or science pages. Stories about Muslim interactions with non-Muslims seem to be concentrated on politics and conventional hard news. News audiences get everything but a multi-faceted view on Islam and Muslims vis-à-vis non-Muslims.

Second, the findings underline the apparent need to focus on interactions between groups and/or individuals in intergroup communication research. These combinations (i.e., two individuals from different social groups interacting, two different social groups interacting, and individual–group interactions) constitute about half of all intergroup encounters in this study. For scholars interested in solely human communication when studying social interactions, this is likely the most fruitful analytical focus. However, the findings also point to the possibility and need to extend this scope by also including organizational actors and even more abstract entities. For example, frequent invocations of the Islamic State or Islam in general likely shape people's perceptions about the religion and its followers, especially in the absence of actual contact with Muslims. Fairly

common are interactions between non-Muslim organizations and Muslim groups and individuals. Thus, non-Muslim audiences with limited contact to Muslims may take their cues from these types of interactions too.

Lastly, most intergroup encounters are shaped by conflict rather than support. It is less surprising that the majority of intergroup portrayals show Islam or Muslims as being the enabler (e.g., attacks carried out by the IS) or the target of violence (e.g., as victims of Islamophobic attacks) – and the majority of those encounters focus on events abroad. The portrayals of these intergroup encounters largely mirror research on individual portrayals of Islam and Muslims, which demonstrate Islam as a violent religion, tend to cast Muslims in a negative light, and frequently link them to news about 9/11, terrorism, migration, and war (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). Essentially, these media portrayals are *still* not much different from Edward Said's (1981) work on Orientalist themes in Western news. Nor do they differ from the many studies that detect a predominately negative tendency in portraying Islam and Muslims in Western media and political elites' discourse (e.g., Bowe et al., 2013; Neumann & Geary, 2019; Powell, 2011).

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with all studies, certain caveats need to be taken into consideration in interpreting the findings. First, this study focuses on a historically underrepresented, marginalized, and heavily stereotyped community in the United States, but scholars have only recently begun to systematically examine the broader trends and patterns of media representations of Muslims (e.g., Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Bleich et al., 2015), much less in tandem with other non-Muslim groups. Future studies can utilize and expand the analytical framework developed for this study by focusing on portrayals of an *intergroup encounter* as the primary unit of analysis, including the message characteristics to describe these portrayals. In doing so, a variety of (understudied) social groups in different national and sociocultural contexts, especially non-Western ones, can move to the center of scholarly attention.

Second, although this study examined the online and offline versions of the nation's two newspapers of record, people's media diets are much more diversified given the contemporary high-choice media environment (Van Aelst et al., 2017). It is therefore important to conduct similar content analyses on other types of news that people frequently consume, including not only traditional mass media formats like local or regional newspapers, television, and movie portrayals but also digital media content such as tweets, memes, or video clips shared in online communities. This type of media content is becoming an increasingly important – and for many often the only – source for experiencing vicarious intergroup contact and learning about other social groups.

Third, examining the patterns and contours of portrayals of intergroup encounters is important, but little is known about the forces that shape this type of news content. Future research should therefore consider news content as the outcome variable and take into account important macro-level explanatory variables, including organizational structures, journalistic routines and preferences, and the demographic profile of the reporters and editors responsible for the news content. Other non-news determinants are important too. For example, to better understand the conditions that facilitate the reporting of intergroup encounters in the first place, it is necessary to also examine the relative size of the outgroup in a newspaper's service area, the representation of the outgroup via local or statewide political offices, the party in power, or the degree of segregation in a given metropolitan area. Future research in this area may be guided by scholarly works, such as Okamoto and Ebert (2016) who identify macro-level factors that help or hinder the reporting about inclusionary events that bring together different social groups.

To conclude, navigating intergroup relations is a complex and richly textured process that involves many micro-, meso-, and macro-level considerations. At the individual level, lived experiences, personality attributes, cognitions, emotions, and behaviors shape how we interact with others. At the group level, conflicts within and between groups, openness, group cohesion, and communication patterns are relevant for structuring intergroup relations. At the societal and institutional levels, media systems, policies, and infrastructure can provide the venues and opportunities for bringing together people of different backgrounds – or keeping them apart and segregated. While nothing replaces the value of direct contact in terms of experience richness and personal involvement (Harwood, 2010), vicarious contact may in fact be the most common and most accessible form of contact people can experience. As a prejudice-reduction tool, it can be especially beneficial to those who lack actual contact opportunities, for example, due to living in rural, segregated, or otherwise homogeneous areas, or because they have preexisting biases or feel anxiety when meeting strangers.

These and other constraints highlight the important role of the media as a facilitator of contact and thus an informer about intergroup relations near and far, a framer of a collective identity, and a creator of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991). The conceptual and analytical approach used for this study may inform studies of intergroup relations in a variety of other contexts – involving different groups, media, times, and geographical and sociocultural spaces. Future scholarship that examines intergroup portrayals in the news, paired with studies of political elites' discourse and public opinion, will provide a more complete picture of engagement with and by various communities in the public sphere, including the potential effects and implications of those communications.

Notes

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2 They are only exceeded by *USA Today* and *Wall Street Journal*, which are more trusted than distrusted by readers across the entire ideological spectrum (Pew, 2014).
3 For more detailed information, see www.textquest.de.
4 The following cases did not qualify as a portrayal of intergroup encounters: First, any references to future events or hypothetical scenarios were excluded. Only past and present events – those that actually occurred or are taking place at the time of reporting – were considered. Second, internal subjective states, such as one group's feelings about another group, or cognitions, such as one group's knowledge or opinion about another group, were not considered *unless* those were openly expressed and followed up by some action (e.g., as part of a public forum or in the form of a protest or manifestation that describes the intergroup encounter). Likewise, describing one group's values or a religion's guiding principles, such as openness toward others, was considered insufficient unless those statements are backed up by evidence in the form of actual (past or present) behaviors that exemplify these values (e.g., openness toward others demonstrated via recent interfaith gatherings). Third, implied interactions were also excluded. For example, some professions, especially those where individuals typically get in contact with dissimilar others (like teachers), strongly imply intergroup encounters. However, the intergroup encounter needed to be explicitly referenced to be considered for further analysis. Lastly, it should be mentioned that not all encounters involving groups are subject to analysis. For example, an interaction between Sunnis and Shi'ites represents an *intra*group – not an *inter*group – encounter since both identify as Muslims.
5 In 6.6% ($N = 10$) of all cases, intergroup encounters involving Muslims were referenced in other domains of the newspapers, such as in the book review section or in obituaries.
6 These percentages do not include those units for which there was no information about the news section available. In most cases, these are portrayals that appeared in news articles published on the newspapers' websites. These add up to 32.5% of all portrayals in the two newspapers ($N = 49$).
7 This share is based on all cases for which information about the position (section, page) was available ($N = 102$), thus excluding portrayals that appeared in articles published on the newspapers' websites (see previous footnote).
8 Due to the small subsample size ($N = 13$), findings are not visualized, and the differences between international and national news stories are not statistically significant; χ^2 (1) = 0.3, $p = .58$.
9 Five cases (3.3%) did not portray encounters based on conflict, competition, or support.

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10 Language and Marginalization

Discursive Practices of Public Service Television in Serbia during Coverage of Antigovernment Protests "One of Five Million"

Ivanka Pjesivac, Ana Petrov, and Lindita Camaj

In recent years, governments in the countries of the Western Balkans have shown increasing signs of authoritarian tendencies, with concentration of state power, lack of the functional rule of law, compromised electoral processes, attacks on democratic institutions, increased clientelism and corruption, and attempts for full control of the media sector (Kmezić, 2020). In Serbia, international monitoring agencies have noted a significant drop in overall freedoms, particularly in the areas of the freedom of expression (Freedom House, 2019a; IREX, 2019; V-dem Institute, 2020). Freedom House (2019a; 2019b) cited the consolidation of state power in Serbia, subversion of standards of good governance, financial pressures on independent media, and lack of implementation of media laws, among other notable problems. The reports further stressed the attempts of the government to undermine independent journalists, consolidate power in public media, and use private media as propaganda weapons (IREX, 2019).

Such developments have sparked popular discontent, as thousands of people have marched for fifteen months (December 2018–March 2020) in the streets of Serbia, expressing dissatisfaction with government policies in this Balkan country. Protests called "One of Five Million" [Jedan od pet miliona] have addressed a range of grievances, such as corruption, rule of law, government transparency, political freedom and plurality, electoral reforms, and economic factors, but one of the main demands remained a call for a free press. The protestors have accused the public service media to have sided with the government in ignoring the voices of opposition parties and movements and presenting mainly an official, biased view of reality. The popular discontent peaked in March 2019, when the protestors stormed the headquarters of the public broadcaster, RTS, in downtown Belgrade, demanding that public media allocate adequate time for

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opposition leaders and other dissenting voices (Freedom House, 2019b; Kmezić, 2020). Despite their public funding, public service media in the Western Balkans remain under political influences and fail to provide impartial views of reality (Marko, 2016).

This study examines particular characteristics of the discourse about antigovernment protests "One of Five Million" in the public broadcaster in Serbia – Radio Television of Serbia [Radio-Televizija Srbije] (RTS). Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), the study identifies lexical characteristics of the language used by RTS in its main newscast Dnevnik 2 to describe the protests and protestors while positioning them in the relevant political and media context. It follows van Dijk's (2006) assumption that discourse analysis is complex and implies taking into account different levels of text and context, as well as the broader social background and interaction.

Much research has indicated that protest groups can be subjected to marginalized representation and delegitimization through mass media via various mechanisms both on macro and micro levels of news story content (Hertog & McLeod, 1995; McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Murdock, 1981). Thus, for example, the relationship between dominant framing of news story and sociopolitical issues has been addressed (Iyengar & Simon, 1993), as well as the focus on physical versus philosophical conflict and on the particular genre of a news story – hard versus soft (Hertog & McLeod, 1995). Although studies have identified the ways in which mass media can delegitimize social groups and protests, little effort has been given to examining specific discursive techniques of these marginalization mechanisms in the context of the Western Balkans. This study positions the language of media discursive structures as a possible marginalization technique and investigates whether such elements were present in RTS's reporting about the protests "One of Five Million." Acknowledging that discursive practices can have an important influence on social constructions of reality, especially when they are emitted from individuals or entities that hold positions of power (Bloor & Bloor, 2007; Wodak, 2004), such as a dominant media organization, we posit that such discourse can become a controlling force able to persuade and manipulate individuals and social groups and thus create a particular representation of social protests and their participants among media audiences.

State Capture of Public Media in Serbia and Protests "One of Five Million"

The tectonic political, social, and economic changes that hit the countries of Central Eastern Europe (CEE) after the fall of communism have not spared the media systems in this region, which developed into a "hybrid media system" marked by mutual bonds and two-way interactions between

politics and journalism (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2008). The authors describe the "hybrid media system" in the region as a mixture of the liberalized media market and the ideas of the free press, with the legacies of communist and post-conflict pasts, including high level of clientelism (Kmezić, 2020; Voltmer, 2013). Having obtained relative autonomy, journalists in some CEE countries have engaged in investigative journalism with the aim to fulfill their democratic function (Štětka & Örnebring, 2013). However, similar to the West, media markets in CEE have undergone a quick spread of commercialization and tabloidization (Gross, 2002; Harro-Loit & Saks, 2006), while the recent economic crisis has had a negative impact on investigative journalism (Štětka & Örnebring, 2013). At the same time, old-school governmental propaganda practices have been gradually replaced with new techniques of political marketing (Bajomi- Lázár, 2016). Politicians engage in more covert tools to control the news agenda through controlling access to information, engaging in news "spin," and back PR or paid news (Erjavec & Kovačič, 2010).

In Southeastern Europe, inter-organizational interactions between media institutions, state, and other elite institutions are shaped by clientelistic ties and by the instrumentalization of both public and private media (Coman & Gross, 2012; Örnebring, 2012). Collaborations between shady businessmen, politicians, and advertising moguls have created complex relationships in media ownerships, using media outlets for the promotion of their common interests and power struggles while moving journalistic practices to sensationalism and tabloidization (Coman & Gross, 2012; Hrvatin & Petković, 2004; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2008). Private media are mostly owned by two types of elites: politicians and businesspeople (Coman & Gross, 2012). Government, however, is in control of the public media in most Southeast European countries, using them as overt or covert propaganda tools to advance their agenda.

The role of the state in public broadcasting media is especially evident in countries of the former Yugoslavia, where democratic consolidation of post-socialist press systems was complicated by the civil wars (Peruško, 2016). Balkan conflicts in the 1990s reinforced the relationship of state and the media, with authoritarian regimes putting state media in the function of spreading war propaganda and state ideologies (e.g., Kurspahić, 2003; Thompson, 1999). Today, political and financial influences on public media in Western Balkans are worrisome as public broadcasters are used for political and financial purposes of ruling elites, whereas regulatory and legislative protections are weak and ineffective (Bajomi-Lazar, 2016; Kmezić, 2020; Marko, 2016).

Serbia ranks 93 out of 180 countries in the global press freedom index (Reporters Without Borders, 2020). Governmental institutions support politically loyal media and launch attacks and inflammatory rhetoric

toward journalists who are critical of the government. In particular, the latest reports emphasize that since the beginning of Aleksandar Vučić's rule, national televisions in Serbia have been in the service of the government as pro-government content dominates informational programs in TV companies with national frequencies, including public service broadcaster RTS (Reporters Without Borders [RSF] & BIRN Serbia, n.d.; Matic, 2020). RTS gets most of its funding from the state budget, giving the government the possibility to control the editorial policy, independence, and objectivity (Reporters Without Borders [RSF] & BIRN Serbia, n.d.). While other private media controlled by the government are known to engage in vulgar and uncivil discourse against the opposition, RTS media discourse has been decent and has lacked explicit hate speech or direct attacks on government critics. Rather their strategy has been to ignore and silence opinions that criticize the government (Matic, 2020).

In this context, antigovernment citizens' rally named "Stop the Blood-Stained Shirts" [Stop krvavim košuljama] erupted in Serbia in December 2018, following an incident in which the opposition leader, Borko Stefanović, was attacked. Soon renamed into "One of Five Million" [Jedan od pet miliona], the protest has attracted thousands of people initially in the streets of the capital, Belgrade, and in other cities in Serbia during 2019 and until March 2020. Protestors' grievances included not only widespread political violence and high corruption but also the lack of media freedom and especially state capture of the public broadcaster, RTS. The protestors have accused President Vučić and the government for suppression of dissenting voices, mounting control over the country's media, especially the public broadcaster, and the use of hate speech against the opponents (Matic, 2020). During the protest walks, which routinely included passing by the RTS's building, the protestors appealed to RTS's journalists and editors not to ignore the reality (Reporters Without Borders [RSF] & BIRN Serbia, n.d.). Anger against the government control of the public broadcaster, RTS, escalated when protestors stormed the headquarters of RTS in Belgrade in March 2019.

This kind of protesting against RTS's reporting was reminiscent of the 1996/1997 student protests against the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milošević, when media bias of regime-backed media was cited as one of the central problems. In the 1990s, protestors also expressed their dissatisfaction with state propaganda by passing by the buildings of the state media and creating an outburst of noise in order to drown out the main evening newscast of then state television, RTS (Jansen, 2000). After the October 5, 2000, revolution when the regime of Slobodan Milošević was toppled and protestors targeted both the parliament and the building that housed the state television network, RTS began its transformation into the country's public service broadcaster.

Media Discourse and Protests: Marginalization and Language

Media are an important source of information about politics, conflicts, and protests and, as such, can provide significant influence on perceptions, opinions, and behaviors of citizens. The theoretical framing of the *protest paradigm* explains that traditional news media tend to ignore or marginalize social movements challenging the status quo (Chan & Lee, 1984; McLeod & Hertog, 1999) and investigates the extent to which news media cover social movements that challenge established orders with shallow marginalization frames. It focuses on micro-level analysis of devices that journalists use to delegitimize social movements (Dardis, 2006) – such as focus on the conflict and confrontation related to specific events – providing an episodic narrative rather than thematic coverage, which would elaborate on contextual grievances and intellectual discourse behind the movement (Basted, 2005).

So far, the studies that apply the protest paradigm have mostly used framing and content analysis strategies, whereas less attention has been attributed to narrative and discursive strategies, which are one of the marginalization techniques defined by the protest paradigm. Language is never used in a neutral form, but its meaning can depend on the context within which it is used, and, as such, it can construct and shape social reality. Thus, the language news media use can provide prominence to some events or downplay the others, ignore some information while promoting other, and paint actors in social activities and their actions in a particular light, which can impact how consumers of news conceptualize events and their participants (Ngonyani, 2000). According to van Dijk (1983), the choice of discursive items that news media use to describe participants in social events can be particularly important as this choice can indicate specific beliefs, opinions, and ideologies that a journalist or a media organization holds in relation to a particular social event. For van Leeuwen (2008), this discursive practice relates to the depiction of social actors as participants of social practices, who can be represented in numerous strategies possibly corresponding to ideological choices of the authors.

Studies examining discursive strategies and news media practices in their representation of actors in social and political protests have found that lexical choices in the depiction of such actors could carry specific implications for the news report. The choice of words is important as it provides the readers with cues for how to define actions and intentions of participants and, consequently, offers the framework for interpreting social events (Fang, 1994). For example, the press has used descriptors with negative connotations to describe participants in demonstrations against intervention in Vietnam in London in 1968 (“hooligans,” “thugs,” “mob,” “horde,” etc.), as well as their actions and properties (Halloran et al., 1970). In

coverage of "riots" following the police action against squatters in Amsterdam, the press used the words such as "hooligans," "rioters," "rowdies," and "thugs" to describe demonstrators (cited in van Dijk, 1983). Similar linguistic traits were revealed in the media portrayal of protestors at the Heathrow Climate Camp. They were identified as "militants," "activists," "hippies," "crusties," and "strangers to soap" (Newlands, 2009). Covering student protests at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1978 and 1990, party newspapers in Tanzania portrayed the students as puppets of foreign enemies and as disobedient, spoiled children, whereas the President and the government appeared as fair and considerate (Ngonyani, 2000). In covering the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, a series of protests against the storage of nuclear weapons in Berkshire, England, the media portrayed women's actions as violent and aggressive applying the language of "force," "blockage," "tear down," and "bare hands" to depict confrontations but did not report on the police violence against women (Eldridge, 1995). A similar underlying pattern of violence was discovered in media coverage of 2009 G20 London summit protests. British media used negative lexical items, such as "alert," "injured," and "bombings," implying that protestors were expected to "storm buildings" and that bankers should "dress down" or "work from home" to avoid violence. In this instance, the British media went a step further in constructing the overarching linguistic pattern of violence, by linguistically connecting protestors from 2009 G20 Summit to other "violent" protests group, creating the image of the existence of one big violent mob and subversive minority (Newlands, 2009). More recently, media coverage of the 2014 Occupy Central protests in Hong Kong in three international outlets revealed polarized lexical choices for description of protestors (Lan & Meng, 2016). In American outlets (*The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*), protestors were often referred to as "students," which could imply the intention to portray the movement as a bottom-up and spontaneous political one initiated by well-educated Hong Kong citizens. According to the authors, the use of the word "activists" to depict the protestors indicated the revolutionary purpose of the protests. However, the *China Daily* often referred to social actors as "organizers," "supporters," and "occupiers." The authors indicated that the use of the word "organizers" could imply that the movement was plotted by some social organization, whereas the words "supporters" and "occupiers" could elucidate some antigovernmental sentiments.

Legitimizing and de-legitimizing discursive media techniques in the context of social protests and their actors have also been identified on the syntactic level. Trew (1979) analyzed subtle changes in syntactic structures between different British newspapers and discovered that they could reveal underlying ideologies of a particular newspaper. The author found that when police were agents of violent actions during "riots," their agency

was described by passive sentences and nominalization, thus making it less implicit. Similarly, van Dijk (1988, 1991) revealed that when the press considered police as members of an in-group, it could downplay their negative role by describing their actions in a less explicit manner, using the passive voice. More recently, Fang (1994) found that ideological position of a Chinese newspaper was reflected in its lexical and syntactic options when describing protests in various countries. For example, the word "struggle" with a strong positive connotation was used to depict protests in countries that have not been perceived as allies of China, but no such examples were found in the set of other countries. In a later study, Fang (2001) investigated how lexical choices, headlines, themes, and the transitivity patterns of two ideologically opposed newspapers in China and Taiwan reflected the civil unrest in South Africa and Argentina and found that lexical choices and agent attribution in syntactic structures played a great role in revealing the ideological viewpoint of the newspaper.

Marginalization of protestors in the media has also been identified on the level of discursive topics. Jacobsson (2021) examined the discourse in Swedish media around the agenda and actions of the global protest movement "Youth for Climate." The author found that the main discourse topics represented protestors as "enthusiastic young people waving signs, feeling inspired and being admired by the political elite for their courage and engagement" (p. 13) but that journalists simultaneously questioned whether young protestors had the moral right to skip school and avoid satisfying their social obligations. The author noted that, by drawing attention to such shallow aspects of news stories, journalists could neutralize social critique and empty it from its political content, thus disempowering the climate protests (Jacobsson, 2021). Examining discursive construction and representation of the 2015 and 2016 protests supporting Biafra's secession from Nigeria, Osisanwo and Iyoha (2020) found that media representation of social actors and actions was not neutral. Selected Nigerian newspapers portrayed pro-Biafra protestors as violent and unruly, while protestors construed themselves as law-abiding. Newspapers also depicted protestors as terrorists and a major threat to the economic growth of the country, but the protestors saw themselves as freedom fighters.

In the Serbian context, academic studies analyzed the media discourse around antigovernmental protests from the 1990s, when media scene was particularly polarized between state and independent media and when the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milošević was in power. During the 1996/1997 student protests, state media often disqualified the protestors, calling them "the forces of chaos and madness" or "manipulated kids" (Erdei, 1997; Pavićević & Spasić, 1997), and often ignored that protests were even happening or severely misrepresented the number of demonstrators. However, independent media created positive, optimistic, and idyllic

image of protestors. Analyzing the discourse of two independent media, the weekly *Vreme* and daily *Naša Borba* from November 1996 to March 1997, Petrović-Trifunović (2017) showed that participants in protests were depicted very positively – as happy, healthy, courteous, responsible, educated, young, cosmopolitan individuals, full of imagination and goodwill, who were hard to imagine doing any wrong. This discourse reflected semantic categories of civilized, culturally elevated, urban, pro-European, and democratically oriented parts of the Serbian society. They were juxtaposed to the "other" part of the Serbian society, those who were part of or who supported the regime of Slobodan Milošević. Using contrasts, hyperboles, metaphors, and other stylistic categories, the others were depicted as old, unhealthy, jealous, uneducated supporters of state tyranny. This discourse around the pro-regime individuals reflected semantic categories of retrogrades, primitivism, rural, Oriental, and communist, thus creating a dichotomy between "us" and "them" (Petrović-Trifunović, 2017). In the scope of the analysis of RTS's coverage of the protests "One of Five Million" (2018–2019), Šalić (2019) found that the Serbian public broadcaster went through several phases in its depiction of protests and protestors. Specifically, at the beginning of the protests, RTS had a neutral tone of reporting but switched to a more negative one when the protestors stormed the RTS's building. The protestors were then depicted as individuals who violently oppose freedom of the press. In later reports, RTS also depicted protestors as violent and hooligans – if not directly in reporter's narrations, then through the voice of government officials aired on RTS.

Building on previous research on media discourse and protests, this study examined the discursive practices of RTS) when reporting about the public protests "One of Five Million" (2018–2020). While Šalić (2019) used content and textual analysis to examine RTS's reporting, our study examines the lexical categories of the language and positions their meaning within the relevant context. Using this approach, this study asks research questions about how RTS portrayed the protests and protestors during the protests "One of Five Million." Specifically, we ask:

> ***R1:*** *Which (a) nouns, (b) pronouns, (c) adjectives, and (d) verbs did RTS use in its main newscast Dnevnik 2 to describe protests and protestors during the protests "One of Five Million"?*
>
> ***R2:*** *What is the meaning of these lexical choices used in the RTS's discourse about antigovernmental protests "One of Five Million"?*

Methods

In order to answer these research questions, this study used CDA. The method consists of analyzing the discourse based on contextual and textual

analysis of media texts and tries to discover the way social power and dominance are enacted and reproduced in media texts (van Dijk, 2001, 2006). It considers language (spoken and text) as a form of social practice and focuses on how societal power relations are established and reinforced via language use (Fairclough, 2003, 2006). In this context, the assumption is that news media have the power to partially control the public discourse and communication as "symbolic" resources of knowledge and information and to consequentially impact people's minds and understanding of specific events depicted in their news (van Dijk, 2001). The analysis of the media narrative thus becomes important in order to recognize different images that news media create about the world in which we live. It can include detailed speech analysis (word by word), image analysis (frame by frame), and sound analysis (tone by tone) (Car & Osmančević, 2016). Analysis of speech acts through CDA carries additional weight in the context of antigovernment protests, as by the nature of their activities they contain political messages and deal with power and control. This type of messages, whose main realization has manifested through the use of language (Chilton & Schaffner, 2002), has been the subject of study in CDA and its subcategories of political discourse analysis (PDA) and political linguistics (Wodak, 2009), although the latter area has not yet been theoretically and methodologically elaborated.

Sample

Transcripts of the population of RTS's news stories from December 8, 2018, to March 9, 2019, about protests "One of Five Million" have been analyzed. The sampling frame of three months from the beginning of the protests was chosen with the assumption that it will generate a large-enough body of material to reach the saturation point in analysis. The newscasts were accessed through RTS's website. One researcher, a native Serbian speaker, watched all newscasts and made transcriptions of news stories that pertained specifically to protests. In total, 101 newscasts generated 56 news stories about protests "One of Five Million." The researchers sampled all types of television news stories that covered protests: readers, voice-overs, voice-overs + soundbites, news packages, and live reports. The researchers not only sampled news stories whose main topic were protests but also transcribed parts of other news stories in which protests were mentioned as a secondary topic. All 56 news stories were then transcribed.

Procedure

Two coders, both native Serbian speakers, analyzed all the transcripts. The analysis was conducted only on the media texts (transcriptions of journalistic narratives and soundbites and interviews included in news stories) and

not on visual elements of news stories. Verbal utterances were analyzed on the lexical level, which deals with individual words, and on the semantic level, which deals with the meaning of the words, phrases, sentences, and whole discourses (van Dijk, 1983). Lexical items, individual words, or phrases that depicted protestors and government officials in RTS's news stories were analyzed. The coders coded for six categories: (1) words (nouns and pronouns) and phrases expressing names for protests and protestors, (2) words (verbs) and phrases expressing action related to protests or protestors, (3) words (adjectives) and phrases expressing descriptions related to protests and protestors, (4) words (nouns and pronouns) and phrases expressing names for government officials and bodies, (5) words (verbs) and phrases expressing action related to government officials and bodies, and (6) words (adjectives) and phrases expressing descriptions related to government and government officials. In this study, only words and phrases pertinent to protests and protestors were used in the analysis, while those pertaining to government officials were left out for future analysis. The levels of stylistic variations in lexicalizations are important as through them basic opinions and ideologies about social participants and social actions can be expressed (van Dijk, 1983).

Findings

Nouns to Describe the Protests and Protestors

In its daily newscasts, RTS in general used neutral nouns to describe protests and protestors. Thus, the words "protest(s)," "citizens," "walk," "line [of protestors],"[1] "people," "persons/individuals,"[2] "those who gathered," "participants," or "gathering(s)" appeared in RTS's main newscast. For example, "Citizen *protest* 'One of Five Million' started tonight in front of the College of Philosophy" (December 22, 2018); "After the *walk* [that started] at the plaza in front of the College of Philosophy, around 7:30 p.m., '*line [of protestors]*' passed by the RTS building" (December 22, 2018); "*Those who gathered* at the *protest* 'One of Five Million' started their *walk* in Makedonska and Svetogorska Streets and arrived in front of the RTS" (December 22, 2018); "Vučić [the President] also comments about *the protests* in Belgrade" (December 29, 2018); "*Protests* [are happening] today in Kragujevac" (January 5, 2019); "*citizens* gathered around 6 p.m. on the Kralja Milana Square" (January 5, 2019); or "Actor Branislav Trifunović was the only one to address the *participants* [of the protests]" (December 8, 2018).

While the words "protests," "citizens," "walk," "line [of protestors]," "those who gathered," "participants," or "gatherings" mainly appeared in narrations of RTS journalists, the noun "people" [narod] was often

used in soundbites of protestors or those who addressed the protests,[3] as well as in the soundbites of the representatives of the government. For example, "Listen to what *the people* are telling you, the ones who do not live off your sandwiches, off your lists, off your elections in which we will not participate!"[4] (Branislav Trifunović, actor and protestor,[5] metaphorically addressing the President of Serbia during his speech at the protest on December 22, 2018); "I can listen to *the people* but won't listen to them [the opposition parties], ever!" (President Aleksandar Vučić, December 29, 2019). "*These people* did not go in the streets in vain!" (Branislav Lečić, actor, protestor, and a member of the opposition Democratic Party, March 9, 2019). In these instances, the noun "people" could be used to refer not only to the entity of protestors but also to its abstract and collective meaning to denote the entirety of a group or a nation. In the latter case it could resonate more emotionally with the listeners and/or viewers. According to Stepanov (2016), in political speeches, presenting social actors a certain way can increase perceptions of assertiveness and transmit a positive image of the reliability and credibility of the speaker or the lack of credibility of the opponent. The sociosemantic choice of lexemes thus transcends the simple selection of linguistic units that are in the function of conveying meaning. In our examples, the representatives of protestors, as well as the ruling party, used the noun "people" in their speeches in order to get closer to protestors and to show that they are on their side, that they understand them and their problems.

Looking further into the nouns used to describe protestors in RTS's news reports, the word "organizers" appeared. The word referred to the organizers of protests, but they were not specifically named. In their analysis of protests in Hong Kong, Lan and Meng (2016) noted that the use of the word "organizers" in the context of social protests could imply that the protests were plotted by some social organization. RTS also mentioned specific groups of people that had joined the protests (e.g., students and professors, representatives of some opposition parties, members of local and national parliaments, some members of the unions, a group of amateur runners). The TV station also sometimes referred to the protestors as citizens of the cities where the protests were held (e.g., citizens of Belgrade, Valjevo).

Besides common nouns that were used to describe protests and protestors, RTS used proper nouns and titles to address individual participants in protests, as well as government officials who commented about protests. Actors of different events can be named in different ways using anthroponomical categories such as their first and last name, nicknames, titles and functions, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religion. These different categories carry different semantic meanings. The way the media name actors in particular events can show the kind of relationship they

have with the named individual or group, directing the attention of the audiences to the specific ways they would want the public to perceive them (Vrtič & Car, 2016). When naming individual protestors and government officials, Serbian public service television used mainly the format of formal titles or first name or last name, as shown in the following sentences:

> Before that, *professor Dušan Teodorović and actor Tihomir Stanić* announced the demands of gathered people (December 15, 2018).
>
> *Actor Branislav Trifunović* has a message for the *President of Serbia* (December 22, 2018).
>
> Before the [protest] walk, *actor Branislav Trifunović* read the letter addressed to *the RTS general manager, Dragan Bujošević* (January 5, 2019).

In soundbites of protestors, the form of the proper name without the official title in vocative case stood out when protestors directly addressed government and media officials:[6]

> *Dragan Bujošević*, citizens are demanding that you leave the position that you usurped and shamed. It is not in the Serbian tradition to keep quiet, *Dragan*.[7]
>
> (Branislav Trifunović, actor and protestor, January 5, 2019)

> And our last goal is to prevail in everything and to go to the bottom of the things, to blockades, to [police] cordons, to refusal of payments of everything and total civil disobediences, all the way to the final goal, and that's you, *Aleksandar*[8]
>
> (Nikola Kojo, actor and protestor, January 19, 2019)

Occasionally, RTS would mention only the last names of individuals, mainly when they referred to government officials (e.g., Stefanović [Interior Minister], Vučić [President], Dačić [Foreign Affairs Minister]). Using only the first name, the last name, or the official function of individuals in media discourse implies that the particular individual is well known to the public and, to a certain degree, more popular than the ones who are continuously mentioned by their full names followed or preceded by official titles.[9]

Pronouns Used to Depict Protests and Protestors

RTS used pronouns as part of the regular journalistic style of writing in the Serbian language (e.g., to avoid the repetition of a previously used noun, or

as a simple substitute for the proper name of a person). However, the use of pronouns to depict protestors and protests in the soundbites stood out from their regular usage. Both protestors and government officials mostly used personal pronouns (e.g., I, we, and they) and their possessive forms (e.g., our, my, and their). Protestors used first-person singular and plural-personal pronouns and their possessive forms to express unity, understanding, and equality among themselves. For example, "*We* are fighting for the future of this country, at least that's how it seems to me, because tonight a large number of young people are with *us*" (Saša Živić, professor and protestor, January 5, 2019), or "A free person is a condition for the formation of a free, democratic society. And that's why *we* are here today as free citizens who think critically" (Marija Bogdanović, professor and protestor, February 2, 2019).

However, first-person pronouns in government officials' statements had a different contextual usage. Their usage projected more of an implicit polarization of "us" versus "them." *Us* (we) represented the side of the good, the ones who were trying to do the right thing, and implicitly included government officials and all those who think alike. On the contrary, *them* (they) represented the bad side, the ones who were doing things wrongly, and implicitly included protestors and those who support them. Serbian language allows for the omission of subjects in sentence constructions, so some of these pronouns are grammatically omitted but semantically present in the examples below.

> As long as there is no violence, let anyone gather where anyone wants, let *them* walk, let *them* insult, there is no negative reaction towards *them*; nobody is preventing *them*, there is no police, no police cordons, no tear gas, all that *they* were doing.
>
> (Interior Minister Nebojša Stefanović's statement for TV Pink quoted on RTS, December 8, 2018)

> *I* can listen to the people, but won't listen to *them*, ever.
>
> (President Aleksandar Vučić, December 29, 2018)

> *[I]* mentioned the solution for Kosovo because while we are fighting for all of that, some people are trying to politicize the situation without offering solutions.
>
> (Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić, February 9, 2019)

Similarly, frequent usage of the personal pronoun "I" or "me," mostly in soundbites of President Vučić, painted the picture of the speaker as the protector of the good and the omnipotent decision maker (e.g., "Let *me* tell you immediately, *[I]* will never grant any of your demands" [President

Aleksandar Vučić, December 9, 2018]; "You know, *I* will not allow the games that they are playing in the rest of the world" [President Aleksandar Vučić, December 22, 2018]; or "*I* will not work under [your] pressures" [President Aleksandar Vučić, December 9, 2018]. On other occasions, Vučić used personal pronouns "I," "me," or "we" to express certain solidarity with people who were protesting, to show understanding for their problems and needs:

> These people are obviously dissatisfied, mainly they are not the losers of transition [processes], they are not poor people, but they are the people who belonged to the middle class, or upper middle class. It is obvious that they are not [satisfied] with something, although *we* tried and fought to ameliorate the situation, to please them.
>
> (President Aleksandar Vučić, December 9, 2018)

> What worried *me* and from what *[we]* must draw some morals, is that an important number of people [at protests] were people of *my* generation and slightly older than *me*, around 10 years older than me.
>
> (President Aleksandar Vučić, December 9, 2018)

Using personal pronouns as deictic expressions, the speaker is pointing out his or his group's positive characteristics, moral credibility, and superiority. In political speeches, first-person singular pronoun is usually used to give credit for good deeds. On the contrary, first-person plural pronoun has a few possible references: me and another person, me and the group, me and the whole country, as well as me and the rest of humanity (Beard, 2000). This pronoun binds the speaker with the audience, with the assumption that the proposition presented is common and therefore indisputable. According to Vuković (2014), the excessive use of the pronoun 'I' is an indicator of egocentrism and gives the audience the indication that the speaker is positioning himself outside the group, while the pronoun 'we' "forces the audience to identify with the emotions of the speaker (p. 229).

Adjectives and Other Descriptors Used to Depict Protests and Protestors

The nouns describing protests and protestors usually appeared without any adjectives or accompanied by neutral adjectives or descriptors: "protest walk," "civic protest," "gathering of citizens," or "dissatisfied citizens." Very often RTS described the protests by the location where they were held, usually the cities (protests in Belgrade, Kragujevac, Valjevo, etc.), or by their frequency (e.g., "This is the *third protest* in a row" [December 22, 2018]), and "Protest walk 'One of Five Million' was held *for the fifth*

time in Belgrade and *for the first time* in Niš and Kragujevac" (January 5, 2019). RTS also used the name of the protest to describe it: protest "One of Five Million" or the protest's early names "Stop Blood-stained Shirts" [Stop krvavim košuljama] and "Let's Count Ourselves" [Hajde da se prebrojimo]. Sometimes further descriptors that included initial motives for protests were used:

> Protest "Let's Count Ourselves" started at 6 p.m. in front of the College of Philosophy after the last week's protests "Stop Blood-stained Shirts" as the response to last month's attack on Borko Stefanović (December 15, 2018).

Often RTS would stress that protests were not politically motivated mainly by using the descriptors to point out the lack of "political party identifications" during protests. This was further supported by the frequent usage of neutral descriptors classifying protests mainly as the uprising of citizens, of the people, not of politicians and political parties. Soundbites were played that stressed apolitical goals of the protests:

> It is not about politics at all. It is about our need, our deepest, human need to live in a way and in a country where the ambition is solely based on knowledge and success on one's work.
>
> (Rade Milenković, actor, theater director, and protestor, January 5, 2019)

On other occasions, RTS implied that protests were in fact political in nature. For example, it called them "a gathering of a part of opposition parties grouped around Alliance for Serbia" (December 8, 2018) or mentioned that there were "political messages" during protests (January 5, 2019). Starting mid-January, RTS's journalists and anchors, as well as government officials, started alluding more to the possible political nature of the protests, which was especially the case when opposition parties more prominently stepped out as participants of the protests and signed "Agreement with People" ["Sporazum sa narodom"] in early February.[10] Later on, descriptions of protests as "citizen protests" alternated in RTS's newscasts with allusions to their political nature.

In the soundbites of protestors, participants in protests were described in a positive light. Positive adjectives were used, as well as descriptors that painted protestors as citizens with good moral values, dedicated to democratic ideals. The following descriptors were used: "courageous people," "thinking people," "dear friends," "free citizens who think critically," "decent, non-violent, normal," "people who don't live off [President's] sandwiches," who support fair elections, free speech, and independent

judiciary and democratic institutions and who represent "democratic public opinion" and "civic awareness." The soundbites of protestors also stressed that the protests were against the government and against "physical and verbal violence." In the soundbites of government officials, protestors were described as "dissatisfied people," "ordinary people," "people who were part of the middle class" but are not "losers of transition [processes] or poor people." Soundbites of government officials sometimes made the distinction between "ordinary people" and "opposition leaders," although both were part of the protests "One of Five Million." On other occasions, government officials would not directly negatively portray those who took part in the protests but would insinuate negative context. For example, the Interior Minister's statement for another TV station was quoted: "As long as there is no violence, let anyone gather where anyone wants, let them walk, let them insult, there is no negative reaction towards them; nobody is preventing them, there is no police, no police cordons, no tear gas, all that they were doing"[11] (December 8, 2018).

Coupled with other neutral descriptors, at the beginning of protests, RTS also stressed that protests were peaceful and without incidents (with the exception of government officials' implying a negative context). However, the rhetoric around protestors became stronger after several events that happened during protests. On the first occasion, a model of gallows was brought to protests at Terazije Square, a part of downtown Belgrade where Nazis had hanged Serbs during World War II, while the President's son received threats on Facebook about being hanged. In numerous soundbites of officials aired on RTS, as well as in reporters' narrations, those involved in the event were called "individuals who carried the gallows," "two young men from Rakovica,[12]" and "two individuals who are close to [opposition] Alliance for Serbia and [opposition] Movement Dveri." Government officials strongly and repeatedly condemned the event, those involved were quickly arrested, and parallels to Nazi crimes were drawn. For example, Interior Minister Nebojša Stefanović stressed that "it is not allowed to so blatantly insult freedom feelings of this nation and to unfortunately remind of the times when patriots were killed, when Nazis hanged those who fought for the freedom of this country" (February 3, 2019), while President Vučić called the gallows "a symbol of the politics of opposition parties" (February 5, 2019). A previously used neutral description of protests as "citizen protests" was switched to a more politically charged expression, "rally of supporters of Alliance for Serbia [the main opposition block]" (Interior Minister, Nebojša Stefanović, February 3, 2019).

On the second occasion, when opposition parties and citizens signed the "Agreement with People," RTS aired statements of Serbian officials who called members of opposition parties "people who introduced in public life calls for shooting and hanging of their political opponents and rape

of women who don't think like themselves" (Interior Minister, Nebojša Stefanović, February 6, 2019). At the same time, officials called the agreement a "tragi-comical political pamphlet" (Interior Minister, Nebojša Stefanović, February 6, 2019).

Verbs and Other Words Expressing Action of Protestors or Protests

To depict the fact that protests happened, RTS used verbs such as "were held," "continued," or "are organized." The action of protesting was communicated through verbs that included "protested," "joined [the protests]," "attended [the protests]," or "supported the protests." Various acts performed during protests were described by RTS using the following expressions: "[they] carried [signs/masks]," "audio recordings were played," "a mini-performance was played," or "the RTS building will be blocked." When the "Agreement with People" was signed, the verbs referred mainly to the action itself and its obligatory nature: "they adopted the text of the agreement," "they signed," "they kept one copy for themselves and put another copy in the boxes," "opposition parties commit themselves," "will offer," "are ready to accept," "they are working on forming," or "they offer." To express the action of speakers addressing the gathered citizens or protestors stating their demands, RTS used both active and passive verbs: "addressed [the protest]," "has a message," "spoke," "stated," "said," "pointed out," "demand," "read [the message]," "stress," "the demands were repeated," "it was announced," "sends a message," "[they] asked," or "it was asked." In its reporters' narration of the protests, RTS mainly used verbs (in both active and passive voices) that described some sort of movement. Thus, the following expressions were commonly used: "the protests started," "the line [of protestors] passed," "the line [of protestors] went to," "the protest walk started moving [towards]," "the line of dissatisfied [citizens] stopped," "they continued the protest walk," "the line [of protestors] was moving," "the line [of protestors] stopped shortly," "citizens gathered," "they arrived [to RTS building]," "the line [of protestors] headed to," or "they walked."

In several instances, verbs that implied the illegitimacy or illegality of protestors' actions were used. For example, during the gallows incident, the following verbs were used: "carried the gallows," "threatened," "are detained," "they are suspected to," "he admitted to have brought the gallows," "he stays in custody," "is out of custody," "to be released on bail," or "decided to exclude [from membership] Srdjan Nogo because he carried the gallows." On another occasion, when protestors announced that they would block RTS's building, the broadcaster quoted the statement of its own board of editors, which claimed that "[protest organizers]

were crossing the line [from legitimate protest to illegitimate pressure]." Also, some verbs and expressions implied the interruptive relationship of protestors and opposition parties' members who participated in protests towards state institutions – "left the institutions," "boycotted [the work of the parliament]", or "made the parallel parliament" – or towards public workers – "about what happened yesterday between protestors and cleaning workers."[13]

In the soundbites of those addressing the protestors, the verbs used to depict protestors' behaviors were more active. Protestors were not seen as a passive crowd that submissively awaits politicians to lead it but as active partakers in social events who control their own life. For example,

> I am glad that you are here, and not on Twitter and Facebook, I am glad that you decided that this fight cannot be fought with our thumbs, but with our faces, our voices, our feet, our yelling, loud yelling. That's why I am asking you to walk peacefully, to walk with smiles on our faces, to walk and to show how many of us are here and how many of us there will be.
>
> (Branislav Trifunović, actor and protestor, December 8, 2018)

> I am protesting on behalf of my four children. I am protesting on behalf of my six grand-children. I am protesting on behalf of the common sense.
>
> (Dušan Petričić, cartoonist and protestor, December 22, 2018)

In other examples, the following verbs were used: "we are demanding," "we want," "citizens are reminding you," "listen to what people are saying," "we are fighting for the future of this country," "we are walking," "there is more and more of us," "we want," "we had it enough," "our goal is to prevail," "we say stop to violence," "it is time that we prove," "we are here to show that we are not afraid and to show that we have dignity," or "we want to live in a democratic society."

However, indirect and direct quotes of government officials' words depicted protestors' actions as more passive, not serious enough, or illegitimate. Thus, passive voice or impersonal or unclear verbal structures were often used to refer or to imply protestors', including opposition parties', actions (e.g., "fake news were disseminated," "protests were organized," "Alan Ford comic book is more serious than the 'Agreement with the People text,'" "What worries me is the will to disrespect somebody, to put stickers on the backs of [cleaning] workers," or "I didn't hear a single serious message [during protests]"). The use of passive structures (e.g., "fake news were disseminated") provides limited liability for the speaker. Put another way, passive constructions, without *nomina agentis*, keep

the sentence structure sufficiently vague enough such that responsibility is not taken for who explicitly performed the action (i.e., disseminated fake news). Simultaneously, the action of the alleged dissemination of fake news comes to the forefront of the narrative and remains in the mental schemata of the news audience. Without a clear identification of the sentence subject, the speaker stays shielded of the liability, while, due to the narrative context, audiences are easily led to make mental connections between the predicate (dissemination of fake news) and the main subject(s) of the narrative or the news story (protestors). Thus, while the subject is omitted grammatically, it contextually becomes connected to the action expressed in a given sentence.

In cases when government officials used action verbs to refer to protestors, those verbs were often used to denote illegitimate or illegal actions of protestors, including the members of opposition parties (e.g., "who carried gallows," "they are taking money but they are not working," "he admitted that he made the model of the gallows," or "people who introduced in public life calls for shootings, hanging of political opponents, and rape of women"). If an official used an action verb with a positive connotation to refer to protestors, that word would immediately be followed by its negation.

> We are always ready to meet their demands *if they want* elections. But *if they don't want* them, it is OK as well. The only thing that is important to us, is that there is no violence. I have no idea what *they want*.
>
> (President Aleksandar Vučić, December 29, 2018)

It is interesting that Serbian government officials often used the imperative form to refer to protestors' actions. In the Serbian language, the imperative form is used to give instructions or directives informally to someone to whom one feels close. By using the imperative, government officials took the power away from the protestors and changed the power dynamics back. For example, the verb "to walk," which was often used in the context of the "protest walk," connoted power. Specifically, it empowered citizens to express their dissatisfaction but was nullified when government officials used it in the imperative form. The act of protestors "walking" became the government's directive "walk!" as in the examples: "walk as much as you want, do whatever you want, except you are not allowed to commit any violence," "walk, walk as long as you want, long live democracy, just don't break anything, don't ruin anything and don't hit anybody!" "As long as there is no violence, let anyone gather where anyone wants, let them walk, let them insult." In these examples, the government became the dominant speaker, while the interlocutor (the protestor), to whom the directive was addressed, was put in a subordinate position. The action of "walking"

suddenly became dependent on the government's mercy to allow it, while its democratic and empowering power was removed. The action was further put in a negative context when the verb "to walk" was juxtaposed against nouns of negative and illegal connotation (e.g., "violence").

On another occasion, protestors (including members of the opposition movement Dveri) expressed their dissatisfaction with perceived biased TV reporting by walking to the building where the regulatory broadcasting body was located. This right of expression was negated when the action was met by a strong verbal directive in the imperative form: "You will not manage [the media] by your own rules! No, you won't be able to talk! There is nothing you need to tell me! Do you want all of us to talk according to your own laws [rules]?! Get out!!" (Olivera Zekić, member of REM, regulatory body for electronic media, January 19, 2019).

The power was further taken away from protestors when government officials, quoted by RTS, used expressions to denote that actions of protestors were in vain (e.g., [even if you add millions of votes for them] "they won't win"; "You can walk as much as you want, I won't grant any of your demands, ever"; or "They won't be the future of Serbia").

Conclusion

Media have an important role in articulating and depicting political transitions and anti-regime movements. They can shape the dynamics of conflicts between the governing elites and social protests with their decision not only if they report or ignore it but also how they frame the discourse (Vladisavljević, 2015). This book chapter aimed to examine possible discursive marginalization of the protests in Serbia by state-controlled public media that often become state weapons in democratization conflicts in hybrid regimes (Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Kmezić, 2020). As such, this study examined the lexical choices of RTS in its portrayal of participants in antigovernment protests "One of Five Million" and their actions – namely, did discursive marginalization occur in these portrayals? The answer is an unqualified yes: At the beginning of the protests, RTS used neutral lexical items to portray protests and protestors. However, when these lexical items were interpreted in the context of the news stories overall, they revealed evidence of discursive marginalization. The lexical analysis identified two types of subtle discursive marginalization techniques: marginalization through superficial descriptions and marginalization through lexical manipulation.

Before delving into the implications of our findings, it is important to note that the method of CDA has its limitations. It is primarily a method that relies on a selected material and a subjective interpretation of researchers. As such, it does not produce findings generalizable to the entire language

corpus of a particular medium but rather describes the language used in a particular period of time in particular news stories. Thus, RTS's language used outside of the timeframe and the sample of this study might differ than the one presented in these findings. Methods of computational linguistics could be used to analyze larger samples of text produced over longer periods of time to examine the frequency of use and the position of lexemes identified in this study. In addition, CDA is mostly used by scholars and not by lay news listeners, viewers, or readers. Large-scale audience surveys could be employed to test whether the findings of this study match the perceptions of audiences regarding media representation of protests and protestors.

Caveats notwithstanding, the data point to discursive marginalization through superficial descriptions. Specifically, in portraying protestors and their actions, RTS often used adjectives and verbs that mainly stressed their temporal or frequentative (e.g., first, second, third, fourth, fifth protest), positional (e.g., describing the streets and squares through which the protestors passed), or motoric (e.g., frequent usage of verbs that describe protestors' movements) characters. Such choices reflect superficial reporting about protestors' actions that was based almost exclusively on the description of the streets where the protestors passed. In a dry reporting style, coupled with the formal use of nouns and titles, RTS did not engage with the causes and consequences of the event, nor did it place the protestors' actions in a broader social context. This style of reporting, reflected in frequent repetitions of the same lexical and syntactic choices in describing protests and reporters using more or less the same sentences day after day, could have a number of effects. For instance, it could have produced a sense of boredom or fatigue among audiences, painting the picture of a stagnant and an unimaginative crowd, effectively marginalizing protests and their participants. Manipulation of language in this manner can interfere with audiences' process of understanding the protests, their goals, and actions; it can also shape viewers' mental models and representations of social events and social actors (van Dijk, 2006).

The data also point to discursive marginalization through lexical manipulations. To be clear, at the beginning of the protests, RTS used neutral lexical items to describe protests and protestors. However, that changed after several disruptive events and as the protests progressed. Stronger rhetoric emerged throughout the duration of the protests, coming primarily from government officials, whose statements stressed the illegitimacy and illegality of protestors' actions and their uselessness or indirectly put social actors in a negative context. Government officials further polarized the various sides, "us" and "them," by using specific pronouns in their statements and stressing the good deeds of the government while highlighting the detrimental actions of protestors and opposition parties. This

approach represents a form of ideological discourse in which discursive manipulation is achieved through emphasizing the in-group's strengths and highlighting the outgroup's disadvantages (van Dijk, 2006). Further de-emphasis of protestors' agency was achieved lexically by using positive words for the in-group and negative words for the outgroup; on the syntactic level, de-emphasis occurred by the use of passive constructions and verbs in the imperative form. Thus, marginalization is achieved on both lexical and syntactic levels by stripping power away from protestors and relocating it in the hands of government officials. Through government officials' statements, protestors became a negative, inactive, and unable other, who needs to be told, by the use of verbs in imperative form, what to do and how to act. RTS did give space to protestors, who emphasized the positive characteristics of participants in protests by using active verbs to describe their actions as well as adjectives that depicted their agency; independence; potency; high moral, ethical, and democratic values; and the love of freedom. Noteworthy is that protestors' discourse was also polarized, stressing their strengths and noting the government's weaknesses. However, it is not clear which side of the story prevailed as the dominant image in audience members' mental representations of protests. In addition, protestors themselves were not in a position of power in this particular context and as such are less interesting for the study of political and media manipulation. Since the effects of different linguistic structures and strategies on political message recipients are not extensively studied in PDA, further studies are needed to test the effects of lexical and syntactic structures on mental representations of political situations, events, actors, and groups. The use of ideological political discourse through mass media and the role of language in this process need much further elaboration, as discourse plays a major role in the adoption of ideologies that organize attitudes (van Dijk, 2002). After all, mass media represent a significant source of information for all societies and thus play an active role in the construction of knowledge about social events and social actors.

History reminds us that discursive practices can be used to both glorify and vilify – to present a person or an event in a positive light or stigmatize and otherize them. In the contemporary hybrid media environment, in which the voices of traditional media organizations are confounded with a variety of online contributors, it seems more relevant than ever to emphasize that responsible participants in mass communication processes should strive to use language devoid of any implicit or explicit biases to avoid possible misunderstandings. As in Aristotelian terms, to bring the proper function of linguistic forms, one should understand that their virtue lies in their clarity and that, in public speech, they should be neither banal nor too dignified but appropriate (Rapp, 2010).

Notes

1 The word used in Serbian was "kolona," which when translated directly into English would be "[protest] column." Although the world "column" in English can have the meaning of a line, row, convoy, or procession of people, it is rarely used in media reporting about protests. That is why we decided to use a more colloquial word, "line" [of protestors], to translate "kolona" in English. In Serbian, the word "kolona," used in the context of protests, implies a line or procession of people who are moving in a formation, usually a regular one. We think that both the words "line" and "column" would be adequate here, but that the word "line" would have a more colloquial usage.
2 In Serbian, two words are used to denote a group of individuals: "ljudi" and "narod." In translation into English, the distinction can be made between "persons or individuals" and "people." The noun "people" is used as an exclusively collective noun referring to the entirety of a group or nation, and "persons" is used as a noun referring to groups of both specific and general number (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). A similar distinction can be made between the Serbian nouns "ljudi" and "narod." The noun "ljudi" can refer to both groups of specific and general number and thus can be translated as both "persons or individuals" and "people," whereas "narod" is used as a collective noun and can be translated as "people." It should also be emphasized that the word "narod" ["people"] carries a certain emotional charge as its usage could appeal to both speaker's and listener's belonging to the same group or nation.
3 In the newscasts sampled for this study, ordinary people who participated in protests were not interviewed. Only soundbites of people who addressed the protestors (mostly well-known public figures, such as actors, professors, and writers) were played. As most of these interviewees were also prominent figures in protests who equated their identity with the entirety of ideas and participants of the protests, they are called "protestors" in this study. The close relationship between prominent public figures, some of whom were sometimes called "leaders of the protests" by the media, and ordinary people who participated in protests, is further exemplified in actor Branislav Trifunović's words who called protestors "dear friends" (January 12, 2019).
4 The speaker alludes here that President Vučić's Serbian Progressive Party [Srpska Napredna Stranka – SNS] distributes sandwiches to their supporters who show up for party-supported events, that it forms the lists of those who support the party in power, and that it directly and indirectly controls the election process.
5 Branislav Trifunović is also the brother of Sergej Trifunović, also an actor, who, during the duration of the protests, became the second president of the Movement of Free Citizens, a social-liberal and social democratic movement in Serbia.
6 Vocative case is the fifth case of Serbian noun declinations that is used to address or call a person and could not properly be translated into English since English nouns do not change forms.
7 "Nije srpski ćutati," loosely translated as "It is not in Serbian tradition to keep quiet," was a talk show hosted by the general manager of RTS, Dragan Bujošević, when he was a journalist at another TV station. The expression here alludes to his former talk show and calls on RTS's general manager "to not be quiet" or to not censor RTS's reporting about the protests and problems in the country.

8 The protestor refers to the Serbian President, Aleksandar Vučić.
9 The sample included one instance in which actor-and-protestor-turned-opposition politician, Sergej Trifunović, was mentioned only by his last name.
10 “Agreement with People” represented a symbolic contract that some opposition parties signed on February 6, 2019, guaranteeing that they would fight for fair elections, free media, and the rule of law. The “agreement” was a response to calls from the organizers of protests “One of Five Million,” and its copies were handed over to protestors.
11 No context was provided to explain who “they” were and what they were doing.
12 Rakovica is a suburban part of the capital Belgrade.
13 No context was given but refers to the assumption that protestors disturbed cleaning efforts.

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11 You Are Not Welcome Here

The Representation of Otherness in Salvini's Instagram Posts

Diego Romeo

European right-wing populist parties have enjoyed widespread and seemingly ever-increasing success during the past three decades, and general elections in the past few years have proved that far-right political formations are still on the rise in many countries. However, while for instance the *Rassemblement National* in France, *Alternative für Deutschland* in Germany, or *Sverigedemokraterna* in Sweden are all popular to a significant extent, none of them have had the meteoric rise to success that the League enjoyed in Italy in 2018–2019.

Founded in 1991 as Lega Nord, Italy's oldest party still in existence has enjoyed varying levels of popularity throughout the years. Once a strictly regional party, the League managed to lead a right-wing coalition at the 2018 general election for the first time in its history and eclipsed its competitors at the 2019 European Parliament election, almost doubling the share of votes obtained just one year earlier. Up to that point, the League's best-ever electoral result was 1996's 10.41%, and as recently as 2014, the party accounted for no more than 6.15% of the general vote. Arguably, the decisive factor for the League's rapid ascent was the change in the party's political strategy under the leadership of Matteo Salvini.

Having set aside plans for autonomy and independence for northern Italy that had characterized the party's program since its inception (Albertazzi et al., 2018), Salvini brought the League closer to the family of European right-wing populists. He did so by defending national identity and making security (or a perceived lack thereof) a staple of Italian political discourse. During his time as the Minister of the Interior, between June 2018 and September 2019, Salvini opposed immigration, denying numerous salvage ships access to Italian ports. He introduced two bills that he branded as "security decrees" (*decreti sicurezza*; Camilli, 2019), which further criminalized nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) rescuing migrants, and sequestered ships and imposed high fines for captains accused of facilitating illegal immigration. At the same time, Salvini constantly threatened Italy's ethnic and cultural diversity from the inside through an exclusionary

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discourse centered around the slogan *Prima gli italiani* ("Italians first"; Coman, 2018).

Salvini certainly would not have gained support for his authoritarian discourse and policies had he not carefully cultivated it through a constant charismatic presence on mass and social media (Albertazzi et al., 2018). Thanks to his extremely popular Facebook and Instagram accounts, Salvini was able to present his vision to larger audiences and forcefully assert himself even in territories where the League had historically been extremely unpopular, seizing the opportunity to take control of Italy's right-wing agenda.

Through critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study provides an in-depth account of a typical feature of right-wing populist discourse that has proven fundamental to Salvini's success: the representation of "others." Analysis of social media content offers insight into the extraordinary communicative potential of the platforms themselves, as they offer populist politicians an invaluable resource for spreading their message without any checks or balances (Engesser et al., 2017). The study of Salvini's Instagram posts dealing with crime illuminates the unique interplay between the issues of security and migration, the two main concerns of the Milanese politician during his time in government in 2018–2019.

This chapter begins by providing the context for this undertaking. I begin by describing right-wing populism, elaborating on its main features in the European context. Then I discuss the characteristics of the League under Matteo Salvini and turn to the study of right-wing populism in the social media context.

Right-wing Populism

General Features of European Right-wing Populism

The nature of populism is much debated. Surveying a large number of definitions of the concept, Taggart (2000) observed that populism possessed *some* but not all of the features of an ideology and pointed to its ability to serve "many masters and mistresses" (p. 10). Acknowledging this flexibility, a dominant position in the field of political studies has described populism as a "thin-centered ideology" (e.g., Mudde, 2007; Stanley, 2008) that presents only a few recurring elements while conveniently incorporating either left- or right-wing ideologies and worldviews. However, as Tarchi (2015, pp. 39–40) notes, the lack of founding texts or proper theoretical background, as well as the open rejection of the term itself by populist politicians, seriously hinder the possibility of describing populism in ideological terms. It thus appears more logical to view it as a label coming from the outside that can effectively, but not necessarily exhaustively, subsume a given set of stereotypes in political discourse found in a variety of

contexts. For the purposes of this chapter, I adopt the position, originally brought forward by Margaret Canovan (1999), that the term "populism" refers to a specific *political style* that "mixes heterogeneous and theoretically incoherent elements in a strategic way" (Wodak, 2015, p. 47).

Right-wing populism, a product of what Antonio (2000) calls reactionary tribalism, represents an extreme version of this style. Cutting across the historical class divide, the appeal of right-wing populism is based on cultural rather than economic criteria. Although early definitions of the "New Radical Right" described it as a political movement in post-industrial societies that achieved success by advocating a combination of rightist free market and authoritarianism (Kitschelt & McGann, 1995), Bornschier (2010) more recently suggested that economic preferences do not play a significant role in the mobilization of the populist right. On the contrary, appeals to the free market are somewhat problematic, as the support base of parties of this kind is largely constituted of so-called modernization losers (Betz, 1994), or mainly blue-collar workers whose financial stability and social status were undermined by neoliberal reforms and globalization processes.

According to Ignazi (2003), parties of the populist radical right also need to be distinguished from post-fascist formations. While the latter were concerned with the materialist issues of the industrial era, the new right is focused on the post-material issues of the globalized post-industrial world. In a similar vein, Wodak (2015, p. 30) argues that the adjectives "extreme" and "fascist" should only be used to describe political formations that openly endorse fascist and Nazi ideologies as well as physical violence. However, this study adopts Mudde's (2014) terminology, in which "far right" is an umbrella term for both the extreme and the populist radical right. According to Mudde, the two differ from each other, in that the first rejects democracy altogether, while the second opposes the pluralism and minority rights that are typical of modern liberal democracies.

The programmatic profile of European right-wing populist parties since the 1990s has revolved around two concepts: an anti-immigration stance involving not ethnic but cultural racism and a simultaneous rejection of a multicultural model of society brought forward by the libertarian left (Bornschier, 2010). In fact, the national populisms of Western and Northern Europe construe the typically populist opposition between "self" and "other" in civilizational terms instead of purely national ones (Brubaker, 2017). Put another way, these populist politicians adhere to an identitarian "Christianism" that has little to do with religion but rather corresponds to a civilizational identity perceived as antithetical to Islam. Still, the national dimension remains of the utmost importance for right-wing populists. In an article focused on Central and Eastern European right-wing populisms, Ding and Hlavac (2017) noted that voting for right-wing populist parties was closely linked to restorative nationalism, or the belief that there

is a halcyon era to which the nation can return by preserving its cultural purity. They also noticed that right-wing populism is not necessarily associated with the anti-establishment sentiment by which it has often been characterized.

Discursively, a few recurring concepts exist that, despite differences, broadly characterize right-wing populism. As in other forms of populism, the concept of "people" is naturally central. Parties of the populist right like to emphasize their anti-elitist commitment to the common sense of common people" (Taggart, 2000;), who are generally assumed to be good, pure, and homogeneous. However, as Pelinka (2013) stressed, how the people are defined (i.e., who is part of the people and who is not) is crucial. In right-wing populism, "the people" are seen as a given factor, whose contours are only established by the exclusion of others. Consequently, "any kind of populism directed against an ethnically and/or nationally and/or religiously defined 'other' can be seen as 'right-wing'" (Pelinka, 2013, p. 7). The exclusion of variously defined others is considered a fundamental component of this kind of populism by the majority of scholars in the field (Wodak, 2015), and it is viewed as the true uniting factor of right-wing populist parties across Europe (Betz, 1994, p. 172). The complexity of society is thus denied in favor of a simplistic "us/them" schema that can be applied repeatedly in a variety of contexts. As Wodak (2013, p. 25) notes, far-right parties throughout Europe "carefully refined their electoral programmes under the rubric of nationalist-populist and chauvinistic slogans, and have subsequently adopted more subtle (i.e., coded) forms of exclusion and racism." This departure from overt neo-fascist discourse has allegedly allowed parties to increase their electoral support and rebrand themselves as populist nationalist parties (Betz & Johnson, 2004), focusing on the defense of the "homeland" and the "national identity" from external influences.

Right-wing Populism in Italy: The League

The former Northern League (*Lega Nord*) – now simply called the "League" (*Lega*) – has long been considered by Italian and international scholars as the foremost example of Italian radical right-wing party (e.g., Betz, 1994). In fact, the League has been characterized as "an almost ideal-typical incarnation of populism" (Tarchi, 2015, p. 243). Before Matteo Salvini became its leader in December 2013, the political profile of the League under its founder and longtime leader Umberto Bossi had already been exhaustively described by many (e.g., Ruzza & Balbo, 2013). However, given its recent shift from a regionalist and independentist identity to a more nationalist one, the ensuing name change and newfound popularity (earning 17.35% of the vote at the 2018 General Election and 34.26% at

the 2019 European Parliament Election; Giuffrida, 2019), and above all the process of personalization that the party has undergone with Salvini (Albertazzi et al., 2018), much of what has been previously said about the League does not appear to apply anymore.

Such changes make it impossible to continue speaking of a "Northern League" when referring to the discourse of Salvini's (new) League; such a characterization would be substantially misleading. This is not to understate similarities between the policies of the "old" and the "new" League or to deny that a majority of the League's electorate is still to be found in the north of Italy. Rather, it is to underscore that all the changes listed above have affected the way the party brands itself to the point where it is unsafe to claim it is the same political actor it once was. For instance, for the majority of its history, a defining feature of the Northern League's identity had been the racist discrimination of people from the south of Italy (Huysseune, 2008) and a more or less serious rejection of the Italian nation-state (Tarchi, 2015). But Salvini's new League strives to make southerners feel included (see Figure 11.1) and boasts a nationalistic pride that is completely antithetical to the party's original aims.

Passarelli and Tuorto (2018) argued that Salvini's leadership accelerated a process of assimilation to the ideologies and positions of the far-right that had been going on in the League since the early 2000s, when the events of 9/11 kindled fears of terrorism. In fact, a xenophobic attitude has long characterized the League's discourse (Richardson & Colombo, 2013), which, over time, has emphasized the economic and cultural threats posed

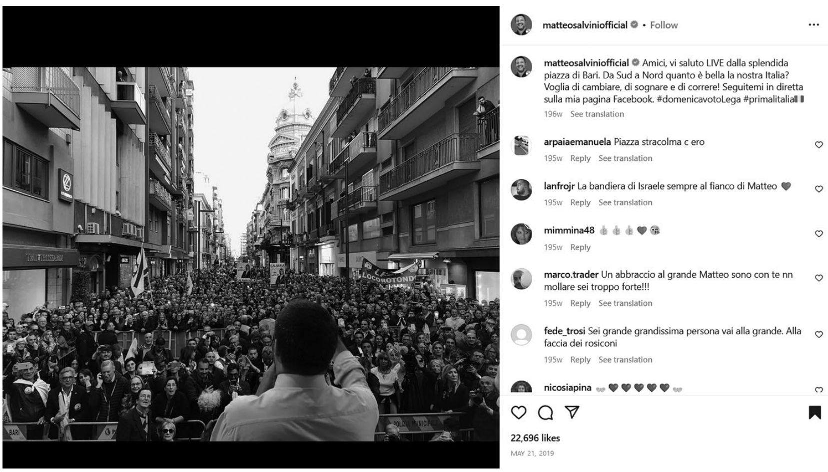

Figure 11.1 Salvini at a rally in the southern city of Bari on May 21, 2019.

Note: The second sentence in the caption reads: "From South to North, how beautiful is our Italy?"

by immigration (Passarelli & Tuorto, 2018). Completely "replacing the Southerner with the immigrant" (Charlemagne, 2018), instead of portraying them both as menaces, has arguably been key to the League's success at a national level. While the secessionist agenda may have remained a key concern for the activist base in the north of Italy, where the party still retains a strong organizational structure, the statewide nationalism promoted by Salvini has in fact come to dominate the political discourse of the League (Mazzarelli & Ruzza, 2018).

Right-wing Populist Discourse Online

The discourse of right-wing populists has been widely described in critical discourse studies, chiefly by Wodak (2011, 2013, 2015), and research has addressed the theme of populism on the internet, analyzing populist politicians' adversarial rhetoric on Twitter (van Kessel & Castelein, 2016) or the political incorrectness of champions of the populist style such as Donald Trump (Gantt-Shafer, 2017; Theye & Melling, 2018). Similarly, politicians' use of selfies to construct their online persona has been largely explored (see, e.g., Abidin, 2017; Ekman & Widholm, 2017a; Karadimitriou & Veneti, 2016). One trend for research addressing conservative and nationalistic discourse on the internet has been to analyze what common people say (e.g., KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016), under the assumption that the most salient feature of social media is bottom-up communication. While the importance of the latter cannot be understated, the crucial role of charismatic leaders for the diffusion of ideas, and particularly exclusionary rhetoric (Kreis, 2017), suggests that more attention should be paid to top-down communication. Focusing on the European context, Aalberg and colleagues (2017) lamented the paucity of research, especially comparative, addressing the role of communication for the success of populism in general. At the same time, Ernst and colleagues (2017) and Krämer (2017) more specifically pointed to the lack of studies analyzing, respectively, populist and right-wing populist discourses on the internet, with research concentrating either on populism in traditional media or on other political actors on social media.

Krämer (2017), in particular, stressed that populists make use of the internet to circumvent the dynamics of traditional media with a double aim: first, to ensure that their message reaches the public unfiltered and unaltered, and second, to symbolically distance themselves from sources of information that are depicted as biased and untrustworthy in their discourse. This is partially meant to solve the contradiction that sees populist politicians using traditional media as a vehicle of information transmission while also accusing them of lying.

While studies have investigated political discourse on the social media platform Instagram, most of them emphasize its reliance on pictures. For instance, in their study of how prominent Swedish politicians fostered connectivity through visual communication, Ekman and Widholm (2017b) stressed the central role of authenticity to this process and noted that the "celebritization" of politicians contributed to a "depoliticization of public discourses" (p. 29). In doing so, they also observed that images were not suited to address complex political issues. Rodina and Dligach (2019), however, analyzed the Instagram account of Ramzan Kadyrov, Head of the Chechen Republic, and found that he used a combination of personal and political topics to promote his charismatic leader persona.

With respect to Instagram, Salvini is the most followed Italian politician on this platform. His followers numbered 2.2 million in February 2022, almost half a million more than his closest competitor, former prime minister Giuseppe Conte. In fact, not only is Salvini's account the most popular political account in Italy, but Instagram is the social platform where, at the time this research was conducted (summer of 2019), Salvini's posts received the greatest number of likes by a large margin (see Figure 11.2).

Figure 11.2 Screenshots of a sample post from July 20, 2019.

Note: The Facebook version (left) received less than half the likes or reactions of the Instagram version (right), despite generating twice as many comments. Figures for the same post on Twitter were considerably lower, with just 3,239 likes and 1,209 comments.

This amount of likes is particularly impressive, considering that, at the time, Salvini had two more million followers on Facebook than he did on Instagram (3.6 million compared to 1.7). These data suggest that Salvini's posts on Instagram were able to engage the attention of a greater number of people, which indicates that it was the politician's premier choice for online communication. Taken at face value, this fact would also seem to contradict, at least in the Italian context, the commonly held assumption that politics mostly happens on Twitter, where Salvini had the lowest number of followers (1.3 million) at the time the research was conducted.

Against this backdrop, the current study has multiple goals. The first is to provide a detailed description of the exclusionary side of right-wing populist discourse in the Italian context, which, despite being notoriously subject to a "populist temptation" (Ruzza & Balbo, 2013, p. 166), has been largely neglected in the field of critical discourse studies. Second, this study addresses the substantial paucity of in-depth, qualitative analyses of top-down populist political communication on Instagram. Although populist politicians' use of social media has been studied in some contexts and even in the Italian context (see, e.g., Bobba, 2019), qualitative studies analyzing written right-wing populist discourse on the social platform are lacking. Given Ekman and Widholm's (2017b) observation that Instagram's visual side is not suited to treat political issues in depth, this study seeks to widen the general understanding of political discourse on social media by providing examples of how Instagram can be used in instances of one-to-many *written* communication. Third, and perhaps most important, the analysis aims to provide useful insights into Matteo Salvini's language and describe and understand his exclusionary discourse at a time when right-wing populism in Italy is undeniably popular and may have potentially significant political and sociocultural implications for years to come.

Object and Methods

Object of Study

In this study of Salvini's representation of otherness, posts published on Salvini's Instagram profile (*@matteosalviniofficial*) constitute the object of study. While Salvini's Instagram posts can cover myriad topics, only those related to crime were included in the study. In fact, crime is particularly well suited as a context in which to study the representations of otherness, particularly because crimes committed by or associated with foreigners, especially foreigners of color, tend to engender moral panics (Cohen, 1972) and produce racist discourse (see Hall et al., 1978; Lindgren, 2009).

Operationally, any post that reported, either in the picture or in the caption, a piece of crime news (i.e., mention of a crime, arrest, conviction, or police operation) was analyzed. Altogether the analysis included the 50 most recent posts that displayed one or more of these features, starting on June 30, 2019, the date when posts were selected, and going back to May 4 of the same year.

Although Salvini's political style on social media relies heavily on pictures, my analysis deals exclusively with the verbal component of Salvini's posts (i.e., the captions). The study does not try to dispute the accuracy of the news reported in Salvini's posts, as this lies outside the scope of the linguistic analysis. Similarly, the content (i.e., the main body) of the articles whose headlines are often incorporated in Salvini's posts is not at issue, as it is separate from what the reader can retrieve from the posts. In fact, unlike their Facebook counterparts, the headlines and pictures that accompany Instagram posts are always screenshots, and no link is provided to access the website to which they belong.

Methodology

The study draws on CDA, and more specifically on the discourse-historical approach (DHA) developed by Ruth Wodak and the Vienna School (see, e.g., Wodak, 2013, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016), while also integrating Theo van Leeuwen's (2008) social actors theory.

CDA views language as a form of social practice, which simultaneously shapes social environments and is shaped by them, contributing to the maintenance and/or change of power relations within society. Aiming to deconstruct hegemonic discourses by decrypting their connection to ideologies that establish and sustain dominance, the DHA offers a fitting set of instruments to dissect texts and identify elements that carry a discriminatory potential, exposing the "persuasive or 'manipulative' character of discursive practices" (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 25). The analysis will adopt the DHA, which has been successfully employed in many studies of discriminatory discourse (e.g., KhosraviNik et al., 2012) and most notably in Wodak's (2015) analysis of right-wing populist discourse, suggesting it is particularly appropriate to investigate the dynamics of exclusion enacted through the negative representation of otherness.

The DHA involves three levels of analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 32): (1) the identification of the discourse topics that appear in the text(s), (2) the investigation of the discursive strategies employed, and (3) the study of the linguistic means through which these are realized. After discussing the composition of the sample and separating the posts concerned with otherness from those that were not (the *entry-level analysis*),

I focus on the main discursive strategies identified in Wodak and Meyer (2016) in order to carry out an *in-depth analysis* of the posts.

The study focuses on two discursive strategies, *nomination* and *predication*, both of which are crucial to the representation of social actors (SAs). Nomination identifies the discursive construction of SAs (i.e., the participants of the processes realized through language), whereas predication refers to the discursive qualifications of SAs.

In analyzing how nomination is deployed in Salvini's Instagram posts, I rely on van Leeuwen's (2008) sociosemantic inventory for the representation of SAs, a simplified version of which is shown in Figure 11.3.

The discussion of all results starts from the assumption that SAs are in fact nominated and not excluded in the analyzed posts, which is why *exclusion* does not feature as a choice in the inventory reported here. Once SAs are nominated, a preliminary distinction is made between personalized and impersonalized SAs. In other words, SAs represented by nouns and pronouns denoting humans are differentiated from nouns denoting objects (*objectivation*) or concepts (*abstraction*). Since personalization was featured much more heavily in the dataset, the schema was designed to reflect this. Indetermination refers to the process whereby SAs are represented as unspecified individuals or groups, by means of indefinite pronouns, whereas determination indicates a SA is referred to by the use of a noun that reveals at least one feature of their identity. Among determined SAs, the distinction is made between specified SAs (identifiable individuals or groups) and genericized SAs (or more general classes of SAs). Naturally, only specified SAs can be referred to by name, but both specified and genericized SAs share a commonality: They can be evaluated through

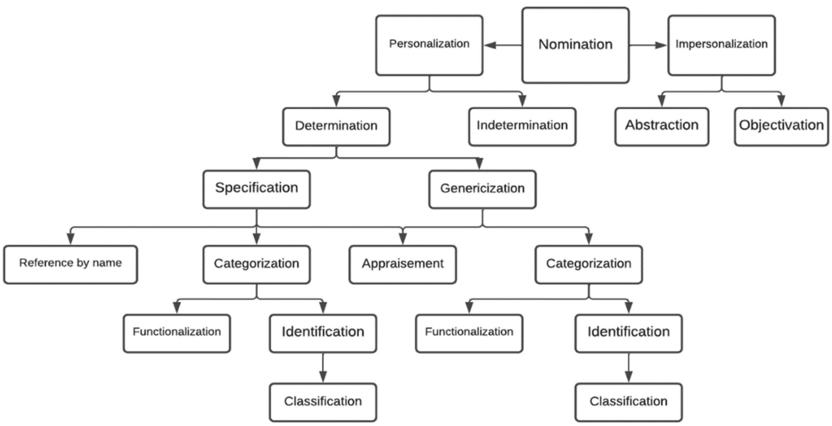

Figure 11.3 Simplified schema of nomination choices, based on van Leeuwen (2008).

appraisement, or categorized via *functionalization* (i.e., described by what they do) or *identification* (i.e., described by what they are). For the purposes of this analysis, identification is restricted to the *classification* type, referring to categories such as age, gender, provenance, and so forth.

With predication, SAs previously constructed discursively through nomination are discursively qualified. In other words, SAs are situated as agents or patients (those acted upon) and/or attributed positive or negative traits. According to van Leeuwen's (2008) characterization, predication involves the concepts of *activation* and *passivation* and their relative subcategories. These terms refer to the roles SAs take in the recontextualized social practice (i.e., in its linguistic formulation), but they do not necessarily coincide with the grammatical categories of "active" and "passive." Activation describes agency and can be realized essentially through *participation*, when the SA is the grammatical subject of the sentence, or through *circumstantialization*, when the SA appears as the *doer* of an action in a prepositional circumstantial. Passivation, on the contrary, occurs when SAs undergo or experience a certain activity or process. One way in which SAs can be passivated is through subjection (i.e., when they appear as the direct object of a predicate or as the grammatical subject of a passive sentence). The analysis also considers instances of subjection cases in which SAs are described as being in a state that is independent of their will (e.g., when incarcerated). Beneficialization is the other main way to passivate SAs, occurring where they appear as the indirect object of a verb. However, the activity or process need not be realized linguistically through a predicate for the SA to be its agent or patient, but it can also be expressed through a noun phrase. Role allocation is key to fully understanding predication strategies since the representation of SAs as agents or patients of a given action or process can significantly alter the reader's comprehension and opinion of the social practice that is being recontextualized.

A third, broader category that is worth considering when analyzing predication is that of adjectives, appositions, and prepositional phrases. These tend to be used as a more or less covert way of attributing positive or negative features to SAs. Adjectives and appositions are included in the analyses independent of whether they appear in a predicative or attributive position.

Results

The Instagram Posts

Of Salvini's 50 posts dealing with crime news, over half of these (N = 31) incorporated headlines and photos taken from the websites of a variety of online news outlets (see Figure 11.4), whereas the remaining 19 only have an accompanying photo.

Figure 11.4 Example of post reporting headline and photo from a newspaper.

Specifically, Salvini quoted news from 21 different media, with only four of them appearing more than once: *Il Giornale* and *Il Messaggero* in five posts each, *Il Mattino* in three and *Il Gazzettino* in two. Notably, the three most quoted newspapers are all conservative publications, with *Il Giornale* in particular being famous for its populist stance and sensationalism (Eurotopics, n.d.). Overall, smaller and regional news outlets were preferred to large national newspapers. In fact, the two most widespread dailies of the country, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*, appeared only once and twice, respectively, in Salvini's posts but only in their local editions for Piedmont and Sicily (specifically, *Torino.Corriere*, *La Repubblica – Palermo*, *La Repubblica – Torino*). Other prominent newspapers such as *Il Sole 24 Ore* and *La Stampa* were never quoted.

As the study deals with the representation of otherness, all the posts were evaluated for relevance before being included in the in-depth analysis. In order for a post to be deemed relevant, it had to mention or deal with SAs, which, on the basis of the textual and visual content provided by the whole post, were classifiable as nationally, ethnically, or religiously other (NERO). In other words, in this context, NERO SAs were non-Italian, non-white, or non-Christian. This, however, does not imply that all relevant posts would have to feature NERO SAs as perpetrators of crimes.

Out of the 50 posts included in the sample, 33 (66%) met the requirement stated above, whereas the remaining 17 (34%) did not. Within the latter group, seven posts dealt with crimes in which the victims were children, five were about criminal organizations or frauds, three reported violent crimes, one reported an attack to the League's supporters by political opponents, and one condemned crimes against animals. This group of posts will not be further discussed here; from now on, whenever the word "dataset" will be used, it will refer to the 33 analyzed posts.

The results that follow include a micro-analysis of the discursive strategies employed in the posts in which the themes of crime and otherness intermingle. The examples shown reflect the linguistic resources chosen to sustain a given discursive strategy and the patterns that emerged in the dataset. As all the analyzed material was written in Italian, English translations are featured in the discussion alongside the original posts.

Nomination

Despite some variation in terms of content and structure, Salvini's posts tended to present information in similar ways. Example (1), from June 27, illustrates this well. For ease of processing, each sentence in the post has been numbered:

> Example (1) *matteosalviniofficial*: 1. ROBA DA MATTI! 2. Ad Afragola un ghanese, dopo essersi autolesionato, ha assaltato due poliziotti con un'arma da taglio ferendoli, fortunatamente solo in modo lieve. 3. Massimo sostegno alle Forze dell'Ordine. 4. Per certa gentaglia prima la galera e poi L'ESPULSIONE. 5. #tolleranzazero
>
> *matteosalviniofficial*: 1. THIS IS CRAZY! 2. In Afragola, a Ghanaian, after harming himself, assaulted two policemen with a bladed weapon and injured them, luckily only slightly. 3. Total support for law enforcement agents. 4. This sort of riff-raff deserve to be imprisoned and then EXPELLED. 5. #zerotolerance

The post opens with a capitalized exclamation (sentence 1), which serves the double purpose of grabbing the reader's attention and providing a key with which to interpret the information included in the post. The remark of outrage is immediately followed by a description of the crime in question (2); the crime has been committed by a man who is only characterized by his nationality, while the victims are described as two policemen. No context other than the place (the municipality of Afragola, in the Naples metro area) is provided, and the facts are only synthetically illustrated, with the crime described in the first sentence prompting Salvini to voice his opinion about it. After stating his support for law-enforcement agencies and their employees (3), he suggests a broad solution to the crime (4), making his position even clearer with the hashtag '#tolleranzazero' (literally, "zero tolerance") in (5).

This post is typical in that, similar to many others (29 or 88% of the dataset), it works inductively, presenting a single case (here, the assault of the policemen by the Ghanaian man) from which general assumptions, rules, and suggestions are derived. The majority of the posts that work inductively begin with a short reference to the facts or a description that

are salient to the conclusions reached at the end. The SAs presented in the first part (which tells the news or "story") are generally specified, either as individuals or as groups, whereas those appearing in the second part, where an opinion or argument is provided, are genericized. In this particular case, three specified SAs appear in the first part (i.e., the Ghanaian assailant and the two policemen). After the specific case is reported, however, all three are subsumed into larger, more generic groups: The two policemen are to be understood as part of the bigger family of law-enforcement agents, which according to Salvini should be supported, while the Ghanaian is implicitly included in a group deserving punishment, summarized by the vague but undoubtedly negative collective noun *gentaglia* (EN: *riff-raff*).

Depending on whether the SAs were specified or genericized (i.e., whether they appeared as characters in the "story" or as abstract groups in the "conclusion"), Salvini made different choices in referring to them. However, even when SAs were specified, *categorization* was overwhelmingly preferred to the use of proper nouns. The two subtypes of categorization (i.e., *identification* and *functionalization*) were both frequently employed to refer to the perpetrators of the crimes discussed in the posts.

As shown in Table 11.1, specified SAs were prevalently identified by nouns indicating some sort of foreignness, related either to their provenance (i.e., the action of migrating) or to their ethnicity. Nouns indicating African nationalities were the most frequently used ones, appearing in a total of ten posts. It is debatable, naturally, whether nouns such as "immigrant" and "asylum seeker" ought to be viewed as functionalization devices describing an action, or rather instances of classification, aiming to frame the act of migrating or seeking asylum as pertaining to the identity

Table 11.1 Categorizing nouns used to refer to specified social actors committing crimes, with number of occurrences

Identification (classification)	
Provenance	Ethnicity
nigeriano [Nigerian] (4), marocchino [Moroccan] (3), senegalese [Senegalese] (2), ghanese [Ghanaian] (1), pakistano [Pakistani] (1), straniero [foreigner] (1)	Rom [Roma] (1)
Functionalization	
Criminal activity	Migration
ladro [thief] (3), aggressore [aggressor] (1), assassino [assassin] (1), gruppo criminale [criminal group] (1), pusher (1), venditore abusivo [unlicensed hawker] (1)	immigrato [immigrant] (4), "richiedente asilo" ["asylum seeker"] (1)

Note: For the sake of homogeneity, Italian originals are all reported in the masculine singular. Quotation marks were used where present in the original text.

of a person. However, unlike other classificatory nouns, these do not seem to efficiently differentiate between classes of people (e.g., the "immigrants" and the "non-immigrants") and are always accompanied by adjectives that clarify the provenance of the SA.

As example (1) shows, categorizing nouns were generally employed to introduce an SA or a group of SAs at the beginning of the post. However, some posts allowed space for the same SAs to be mentioned again. In these cases, Salvini often chose to use *appraisement* to refer to the SAs who had committed the crimes in question, as in example (2), from June 12:

> Example (2) *matteosalviniofficial*: 1. A Piacenza un marocchino trentenne pluripregiudicato ha ferito una barista e un poliziotto, resistendo all'arresto grazie all'aiuto di altre persone (in corso di identificazione). 2. Ora il delinquente è in carcere e a breve sarà ESPULSO! 3. Felice di poterlo cacciare, TOLLERANZA ZERO per criminali e clandestini!
>
> *matteosalviniofficial*: 1. In Piacenza, a thirty-year-old Moroccan with a criminal record injured a barista and a policeman, resisting arrest thanks to the help of other people (who are currently being identified). 2. The thug is now in jail and will soon be EXPELLED! 3. Happy to throw him out, ZERO TOLERANCE for criminals and illegal migrants!

Example (2) differs from example (1) in that here the SA who committed the crime is actually reported to be in jail and expecting expulsion instead of being simply included into a larger group of people who allegedly deserve such punishment. This allows Salvini to direct his moral evaluation towards the single SA, defined as a *delinquente* (EN: *thug*) in sentence 2, before stating there will be no tolerance towards the group of people in which he is implicitly included ("criminals and illegal migrants") in sentence 3. Appearing a total of eight times in the dataset, *delinquente* was the noun Salvini most frequently used to morally evaluate perpetrators of crimes. The nouns *verme* (EN: *vermin*) and *infame* (EN: *bastard*), both indicating a despicable person, were also featured in the dataset.

There was only a single instance in which an SA responsible for a crime was introduced by his actual name. In the post reported in Figure 11.5, dated June 14, the use of a classificatory noun referring to the nationality of the offender would have probably puzzled the reader and would have not effectively linked the post to others like those that have been presented so far.

> Example (3) *matteosalviniofficial*: Reggio Emilia. The Finnish citizen Darko Koku Asre Lauri, 28 years of age, with a criminal record, groped a policewoman and then masturbated.

Figure 11.5 Example of Salvini's use of visuals to identify ethnicity.

> After being released (???) by the judge because the fact was considered "minor" (???), he went back to the station armed with a stick and created a panic!!!
>
> Unbelievable.
>
> I wrote to the Minister of Justice to ask if the decision of the Court was correct and I will fight so that these crimes are not considered "minor" anymore: zero tolerance for those who come to Italy to live as criminals.
>
> P.s. This gentleman will obviously be sent back home!

Arguably, had the offender been framed simply as a Finnish citizen (i.e., as a citizen of the European Union [EU]), the post would have not fit in the same anti-immigration discourse as the others, which usually represent as criminals those with African and/or Muslim backgrounds. However, the specification of the offender's name, paired with his picture, clarifies that the post is in fact part of the very same discourse.

The post also introduces an interesting aspect of Salvini's rhetoric. Salvini uses collective (*gentaglia*, "riff-raff") and plural nouns (which could be associated via conjunction, as in "criminals *and* illegal migrants") to subsume individual SAs into larger categories used for his arguments in examples (1) and (2). However, complex nominal groups featuring defining relative clauses like the one underlined in example (3) represent a commonly employed device to refer to genericized SAs. In Italian, these

nominal groups function in exactly the same way, being introduced by the singular pronoun *chi*, which subsumes the functions of a demonstrative and a relative pronoun. This means that for every "those who" + plural verb in English, there is "chi" + singular verb in Italian (Table 11.2).

On no occasion does Salvini explain who exactly belongs in the groups of SAs he constructs in this way, but these nominal groups are strategically placed in the text and can lead the reader to infer that the category of people includes specified SAs mentioned previously. Despite such ostensible rhetorical efficacy, however, the link between the specified and the genericized SAs is not always clear-cut, as example (4), from June 15, shows:

> Example (4) *matteosalviniofficial*: 1. A Pisa due senegalesi arrestati e un altro denunciato: 2. Insegnavano il Corano a ragazzini tra i 7 e i 17 anni a colpi di BASTONE... 3. Grazie a Forze dell'Ordine e inquirenti. 4. Nessuno spazio agli estremisti, a chi predica odio, picchia, discrimina le donne. 5. Siamo orgogliosi della nostra civiltà e la difenderemo a tutti i costi.
>
> *matteosalviniofficial*: 1. Pisa. Two Senegalese arrested and another reported: 2. They taught the Quran to children aged between 7 and 17 beating them with a CANE… 3. Thanks to law-enforcement agents and investigators. 4. No space for extremists, nor for those who preach hate and beat and discriminate against women. 5. We are proud of our civilization and we will defend it at all costs.

In example (4), the underlined nominal group does not match the story reported in sentence 2, as the fact that the Senegalese men were abusive is

Table 11.2 Functionalizing nominal groups used to refer to genericized social actors

Functionalizing nominal groups	
• chi sbaglia	• those who make a mistake
• chi aggredisce le Forze dell'Ordine e i pubblici ufficiali	• those who assail law-enforcement agents and public officers
• chi predica odio, picchia, discrimina le donne	• those who preach hate and beat and discriminate against women
• chi aggredisce donne e uomini in divisa	• those who assail women and men in uniform
• chi viene in Italia a vivere da delinquente	• those who come to Italy to live as criminals
• chi ci viene a portare la guerra in casa	• those who bring war to our home
• chi mostra totale disprezzo per la vita umana	• those who show utter contempt for human life
• chi non fugge dalla guerra ma ce la porta in Italia	• those who don't run from war but bring it to Italy

insufficient to demonstrate they belong in the category in which Salvini is attempting to place them. Nevertheless, if readers are to make sense of the text as a coherent unit, they are forced to interpret the generalization as stemming from the actions of the Senegalese men, as well as accepting it as an appropriate description of how they and others like them live. This justifies the claim in sentence 5, which does not attempt to conceal that Salvini is arguing for the existence of a civilizational divide between the West and the Muslim world.

Nominal groups incorporating a defining relative clause are one of two linguistic realizations of functionalization (and by far the most frequent one) used by Salvini to create groups of genericized SAs in the conclusions of his posts. The other type involves simple plural nouns. Within this second group, a few nouns are found, which, while still formally constituting instances of functionalization, cast doubt on the honesty of immigrants. These include the already cited "illegal migrants" and expressions like *finti profughi* (EN: *fake refugees*) and *rifugiati* (EN: *refugees*) in inverted commas to signal irony.

Finally, if classification was substantially infrequent, with its only instance being *estremisti* (EN: *extremists*) in example (4), appraisement was largely employed, both in the form of plurals and of collective nouns (e.g., "riff-raff" and "criminals" in examples 1 and 2, respectively).

Predication

As shown earlier, whenever NERO SAs – national, ethnic, and religious others – appeared in the posts, their portrayal was invariably unflattering. This is not simply a consequence of the negative connotations of certain nouns used to describe them; rather, it is due to the negative actions they were reported as doing. Essentially, these portrayals are the result of the predication strategies employed.

In the majority of cases, when specified NERO SAs were portrayed as the agents of an activity in the posts, they were framed as criminal, as the language recontextualized an offense they had allegedly committed. A relatively wide array of verbs and locutions were used to describe the criminal and borderline-criminal activities of this group of SAs, a large part of which involved violent actions. Virtually no predicate was used to describe non-criminal or non-negative activities when the agent was a NERO SA (see Table 11.3).

Although less frequent, noun phrases were also used as a form of predication to indirectly attribute crimes to NERO SAs. The dataset included five such instances, all appearing in prepositional phrases introduced by *per* (EN: *for*) aimed at explaining why an SA was arrested or reported.

Table 11.3 Instances of predication involving participating and circumstantialized specified NERO social actors

Violent crimes
aggredire [to assail] (3), assaltare [to assault], attaccare [to attack], autolesionarsi [to harm oneself], ferire [to injure] (4), picchiare [to beat], prendere a calci e pugni [to kick and punch], prendere a pugni [to punch], staccare a morsi [to bite off] (3), violentare [to abuse]
Non-violent crimes
derubare [to rob], dichiararsi minorenne [to claim to be underage], insultare [to insult], masturbarsi [to masturbate], resistere all'arresto [to resist arrest], rifiutare di essere identificato [to refuse to be identified], scappare [to run off], spacciare [to sell drugs]
Violent and threatening behavior
farlo per vendetta [act out of revenge], seminare il panico [to create a panic], tentare di violentare [to attempt to abuse]
Other activities
insegnare il Corano [to teach the Quran], tornare in stazione [to return to the station]

Note: Every item is reported in the infinitive and only occurs once in the dataset, except where noted. The classification is based on the context in which the verbs appeared.

This can be seen in sentence 1 of example (5), containing the metaphorical expression *spaccio di morte* (EN: *death dealing*):

> Example (5) *matteosalvinioffcial*: 1. "Richiedente asilo" gambiano a cui è stata negata la protezione per ben due volte è stato arrestato a Genova per **spaccio di morte**. 2. Ora è in carcere, pronto per essere trasferito ed ESPULSO. 3. Bene così, chi sbaglia paga. 4. Nessuna tolleran[za] con i criminali.
>
> *matteosalvinioffcial*: 1. Gambian "asylum seeker" who had already been denied protection twice was arrested in Genoa for **death dealing**. 2. He is in jail now, ready to be relocated and EXPELLED. 3. Well done, who commits a mistake has to pay for it. 4. Zero tolerance with criminals.

There was only a single instance of activated predication involving genericized NERO SAs. This is arguably due to Salvini's choice to represent genericized SAs as the patients of actions and processes in the conclusions of his posts. Before exploring what activities NERO SAs were depicted as undergoing, it is worth taking a look at the *victims* of the crimes they were reported to have committed (i.e., the patients of the instances of predication that have been discussed so far). In this respect, the most significant pattern should have emerged already: If we exclude example (5), in which

no mention of victims is made, three of the four examples shown thus far have law-enforcement agents as their victims. In fact, in 16 of the 33 analyzed posts, police and carabinieri were linguistically represented as the victims (patients) of the criminal actions committed by NERO SAs. Considering that 10 out of the 33 posts do not include any linguistic mention of victims, law-enforcement agents are portrayed as victims in more than two out of three posts. The remaining victims are either functionalized on the basis of their occupation (barista, bus driver, nurse, tobacconist, tourist, train manager) or simply identified through age and gender. Notably, however, as singular nouns in Italian can include gender classification, functionalized nouns referring to individual SAs would consistently reveal their gender. Independent of the specific nomination choices, women were represented as victims in seven posts, two of which were genericized SAs. Specified SAs classified as children, on the contrary, were represented as victims in three of the 33 posts.

Turning to NERO SAs, Table 11.4 illustrates the variety of types of predications in which they were represented as patients.

Whenever NERO SAs were passivated in the narrative part of a post, they generally were reported as having been subjected to some form of

Table 11.4 Instances of passivated predication involving NERO social actors, with number of occurrences

Actions reported as factual
arrestare [to arrest] (10), bloccare [to stop], cogliere in flagrante [to catch red-handed], concedere la protezione [to grant protection], condannare [to convict], denunciare [to report] (2), fermare [to stop], identificare [to identify] (2), mandare in carcere [to send to jail], negare la protezione [to deny protection], prendere [to catch], rimettere in libertà [to release], uccidere [to kill]
States/Processes Independent of Nero SAs' Will
essere in carcere [to be in jail] (2), finire in galera [to land in jail], non uscire di cella [to not leave one's cell], pagare [to pay] (2), trovarsi in carcere [to be in jail]
Actions reported as imminent
espellere [to expel] (5), rispedire a casa [to send back home] (2), trasferire [to relocate]
Actions reported as desirable and/or possible
cacciare [to throw sb out], combattere [to fight], espellere [to expel] (2), mettere in condizione di non avere più figli [to prevent from having more children], punire [to punish]
Nouns describing desirable processes/states involving NERO SAs
arresto [arrest], carcere [jail], certezza della pena [certainty of the penalty], ergastolo [life in prison], espulsione [expulsion] (3), galera [jail], guerra [war], nessuna tolleranza [no tolerance], nessuno spazio [no space], pena esemplare [exemplary penalty], pene severe [harsh penalties], tolleranza zero [zero tolerance] (7)

Note: All predicates were reported in the infinitive.

restriction of their personal freedom, with a variety of verbs revolving around the concept of detention. This was done through the use of one of the verbs in category 1, which revolved around actions reported as factual. On some occasions, SAs who had been apprehended were described through a series of verb phrases relative to incarceration and lack of freedom or presented as having to pay for their crimes (category 2).

Quite notably, a process that both specified and genericized foreign SAs were reported as about to undergo or deserving of undergoing was that of being expelled from the country (category 3). This process was realized through the explicit use of the verb *espellere* or the substantive *espulsione*, or through other less formal expressions such as *rispedire a casa* ("to send back home").

Passivated predication realized through substantives (category 5) was found in particular in the second part of Salvini's posts, where he suggested what NERO SAs should expect after committing a crime. The use of nominalized processes is typical of the brevity of expression of Italian newspaper headlines. The expressions *tolleranza zero* and *nessuna tolleranza* ("zero tolerance") summarize Salvini's attitude towards SAs committing crimes and were used in total eight times with NERO SAs as patients. All the other substantives summarizing processes the SAs would have to undergo can be understood as articulations of the "zero tolerance" agenda, including *galera* or *carcere* (EN: *jailtime*), expulsions, and more generally, harsh (or harsher) penalties.

A third and final salient category of predication devices involves adjectives, appositions, and prepositional phrases. In Salvini's posts, these often complemented information provided when nominating SAs so that when these individuals were identified through classification, information about their occupation or function was provided through predication; when these SAs were functionalized, predication would provide information about their identity. Once again, if an SA was a foreigner, this fact was frequently mentioned: Overall, six different adjectives referring to nationalities or ethnicities were used to characterize the SAs, but their origin could also be underspecified if this was sufficient to present the argument effectively, as in this May 21 post:

> Example (6) *matteosalviniofficial*: 1. Arrestato giovane immigrato **nordafricano** per il rogo che ha devastato la sede della Polizia locale di Mirandola …. 2. Azzerare l'immigrazione clandestina, in Italia e in Europa, è un dovere morale: A CASA tutti!
>
> *matteosalviniofficial*: 1. Young **North-African** immigrant arrested for the fire that devastated Mirandola's local police office …. 2. Eradicating illegal immigration, in Italy and in Europe, is a moral duty: Let's send everyone HOME!

Other instances of adjectival predication were aimed at explicitly portraying SAs in a negative light: The adjectives *pregiudicato* and *pluripregiudicato*, both denoting previous offenders, were used four times in the dataset. SAs were also attributed culturally disvalued features such as "blind drunk" and "violent," or features that could signal swagger as in example (7), from May 9, in which the SA is not nominated at all but identified through what he has (a fashion accessory perceived as superfluous) or does not have (a ticket, necessary to travel on the train):

> Example (7) *matteosalviniofficial*: ROBA DA MATTI! L'avete visto in qualche telegiornale?
>
> Bari (Triggiano), **senza biglietto** (**ma con cappellino**) prende a pugni il capotreno, poi un poliziotto e scappa (a pagarci la pensione) …
>
> *matteosalviniofficial*: THIS IS CRAZY! Did you see this in the news?
>
> Bari (Triggiano). **Without a ticket** (**but with a cap**), punches the train manager and a policeman and then runs (to pay our pensions).

Conclusions

Despite the claim that populist politicians use social media to circumvent traditional ones (Krämer, 2017), the data here show otherwise. Salvini frequently quotes traditional news when posting on social media, as if preempting accusations of spreading disinformation. However, he also seems to be fairly selective in his choice of source material, carefully choosing news that helps him construct his personal discourse, most notably local news.

The main discourse pervading the dataset is one of order and retribution. The illegal acts reported in the posts are in fact consistently framed as intolerable and worthy of harsh punishments. In 32 out of 33 posts, one or more NERO SAs were depicted as offenders, through either nomination or predication strategies, or both. Independent of the seriousness of the offense, if the offender was a person of foreign origin, Salvini would be sure to specify this, thus facilitating the creation of an us–them contraposition conducive to increasing support for his policies. This approach results in a recurring sub-discourse that suggests the best way of dealing with foreigners committing offenses is to expel them from the country. However, since single cases were instrumentalized to make general claims, considerable ambiguity arises as to who should be expelled – individual SAs, people who commit similar crimes, or the entire nationality-, ethnicity-, or religion-based category in which the single SA has been placed. The strategical blurring of the categories of legal and illegal migrants ensured that the group of the undesirables had very unclear borders, thus contributing to the confusion. Interestingly, however, while the necessity or possibility

of expulsion for foreign offenders was frequently stated, there was no single post reporting that an expulsion had taken place.

The seriousness of the crimes was often stressed by mentioning the victims, a typical *argumentum ad misericordiam*. Essentially, two kinds of victims were mentioned in the posts: working and middle-class people (most notably, law-enforcement agents) and the weak and vulnerable. Police and carabinieri were often mentioned to stress the importance of law and order in the society envisaged by Salvini, with his position emerging clearly in a post from June 20: "Is assaulting law-enforcement agents not enough to land in jail?"

The posts are also permeated by a rhetoric of efficiency, as every post presents the cases either as solved, often pointing to the merits of bills passed by Salvini, or as solvable, by hinting at the necessity for stricter laws. Law-enforcement agents play a fundamental role in this, as they are presented in the double role of solvers and victims and, hence, as indicators of the success of enforced policies and of the need for new ones.

It is also worth noting that Salvini never disclosed reasons or circumstances that could help understand the actions of the perpetrators of the crimes. Instead, he framed those actions as though they were the necessary product of ill will or of a wicked nature. While the problem of migration has been with good reason a central concern for the Italian government in the past years, Salvini has clearly instrumentalized the question, turning foreigners into scapegoats and construing them as a dangerous threat to the nation. The dataset ultimately indicates that Salvini's rhetoric is very much compatible with the characterization of European right-wing populism.

This investigation hints at a number of other potential efforts that can illuminate the representation of otherness and its impact on society. To begin, although this study was limited to the representation of otherness in a single context in a single country using a single social media platform – namely, Salvini's Instagram posts dealing with crime – assessments of his and others' rhetorical strategies can be undertaken in other countries, using other sociopolitical issues and on different mediated channels. Scholars could investigate whether the rhetorical strategies presented here would be deployed in posts dealing with crimes that did not involve NERO SAs. In addition, the particularities of Salvini's writing style, mixing colloquial and bureaucratic Italian, remain largely unexplored, as are other discursive strategies commonly employed by Salvini.

Ultimately, this study makes an important contribution by describing in detail one of the chief strategies to which Salvini, as many other right-wing populists in Europe, North America, and East Asia, has frequently resorted: the criminalization of the other. While the issue of immigration may have fallen off the public agenda due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is

sure to return as European nations and other countries continue to discuss transnational issues such as the global economy and the ongoing climate crisis. This study has illustrated how exclusionary discourses that aim to criminalize otherness involve the strategic obscuring of the social conditions and political choices that bring about economic hardship, immigration, and crime. As long as such discourses persist, the success of right-wing demagogues is destined to continue and at the expense of social inclusion.

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